



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

This thesis has been submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for a postgraduate degree (e.g. PhD, MPhil, DClinPsychol) at the University of Edinburgh. Please note the following terms and conditions of use:

This work is protected by copyright and other intellectual property rights, which are retained by the thesis author, unless otherwise stated.

A copy can be downloaded for personal non-commercial research or study, without prior permission or charge.

This thesis cannot be reproduced or quoted extensively from without first obtaining permission in writing from the author.

The content must not be changed in any way or sold commercially in any format or medium without the formal permission of the author.

When referring to this work, full bibliographic details including the author, title, awarding institution and date of the thesis must be given.

# **Making sense of ourselves**

## **Reconceptualising reflexivity and experience**

Jacqueline Karen Andrea Serra Undurraga

**In fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

Department of Counselling, Psychotherapy and Applied Social Sciences

School of Health in Social Sciences

The University of Edinburgh

2020



## Lay summary

In this research project, I aim to re-think about what it entails to *make sense of ourselves*. To this aim, I reconceptualise both reflexivity and experience – including the notions of subjectivity that they imply. This is a conceptual inquiry where I read the concepts through different traditions to arrive at renewed understandings of them. The traditions that I use are poststructuralism, posthumanism and, to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis in a relational strand. Methodologically, I consider that each reconceptualisation opens new experiential possibilities and new worlds. Coherently with that, I do not think of my theoretical work as divorced from my work as a psychotherapist and my personal life. Hence, I bring them to the text as both influential forces for my conceptual articulations and as transformed by my reconceptualisations.

I argue that we are never reflexive about ourselves alone; instead, we do it as part of the relational, cultural and material milieu that is shaping us at that moment. Following from that, the possibility of reflexively questioning our assumptions is not given by a simple decision of doing so but by yielding to foreign milieus or fields that can make our assumptions shift and so allow us to question what we were previously taking for granted. Furthermore, in my conceptualisation of reflexivity, I contend that when we are reflexive about ourselves, we do not capture how we feel/think as if it was something already there; instead, I put forward that what we do when we are reflexive about ourselves is to relate to ourselves in particular ways that *produce* our reality (including ourselves). I posit that we are constantly reflexively relating to ourselves in ways that go well beyond our awareness and intentions and that these ways of relating are not performed by us as isolated individuals but as part of a greater configuration that includes cultural and material forces. I invite the meta-reflexive practice of wondering about how we are relating to ourselves and what that is producing as a useful way to bring the attention to how we are part of the world's becoming.

Diffraction has emerged as a concept opposed to reflexivity inasmuch as reflexivity is seen as trying to *represent* what 'is' there or who we 'are', thus, attempting to mirror reality. Instead, diffraction argues that we cannot represent; there is not a mirroring but an interference that transforms us. In contrast, I argue that we never find just reflexivity or just diffraction; for example, when we try to mirror ourselves, this very mirroring has already some degree of difference introduced. My conceptualisation of reflexivity is already a diffracted reflexivity. Furthermore, I argue that it is beneficial to be meta-reflexive about diffractive practices because, unavoidably, we will make sense in ways that are against what we explicitly claim. Diffraction emphasises processes of transformation and becoming but, in its radical rejection of reflexivity, reproduces the categorical and realist reasoning that it rejects.

Throughout the thesis, I emphasise the need to think about what the different conceptualisations *do* rather than judging them as truer or better as if there was just one objective world. Each conceptualisation emerges from a particular context and produces a different world. Following from that, I think about experience through three traditions – existential phenomenology, poststructuralism and posthumanism – looking to see where they take me. Then, I articulate a reconceptualisation of subjective experience using my explorations. I think about experience as an impersonal affective force that moves us. This force does not belong to an individual but is produced in a greater relational, material and cultural context. We do not symbolise 'our' experience but an experience of the whole of the situation that passes through us and shapes us as subjectivities when we process it. We work-through this experience not solely cognitively but by our bodily sense; this does not mean, though, that we should just 'follow' our experience, indeed, we also need to be critical of it because it can lead us to reproduce social and relational dynamics that have detrimental consequences.

In conclusion, when we make sense of ourselves we produce ourselves, not masterfully, but as part of a greater configuration that includes our affective

experience, relationships, cultural frames of understanding and material arrangements, all of them with their own force. The way in which we make sense and thus our subjectivity is continuously produced from this greater configuration and further produces new movements within it.

## Abstract

This is a research project aims to reconceptualise reflexivity and experience to think anew about making sense of ourselves. Methodologically, I think through different traditions to *diffract* my concepts of interest, arriving at – necessarily temporary – renewed articulations. The traditions that I mostly use are poststructuralism, posthumanism and to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis in a relational strand.

The new conceptualisations that I put forward are not only theoretically – abstractly – important, as if theory could be divorced from life. Instead, these new conceptualisations are important because they produce new worlds: different ways of becoming a subject, different ways of articulating affective experience, different questions, different tools, different problems, and so on. In coherence with that, at different points throughout this research, I bring to the page how these reconceptualisations are influenced by my experiences – including my experience as a psychotherapist – and how these reconceptualisations produce me and my experience differently.

Based on a relational perspective, we do not pre-exist our relating but are produced through relating – not only in interpersonal terms but in material-discursive ones. In coherence with this, my conceptualisation of reflexivity shifts the understanding of it as a discrete activity performed by a bounded subjectivity that captures how things ‘are’ to understand it as an ever-present way of relating to ourselves that is not performed *by* an already bounded subject but *produces* a particular kind of subjectivity and a certain world.

With this relational, material-discursive and performative understanding of reflexivity, I contend that the possibility of questioning our assumptions is not given by an individual decision but requires yielding to the foreignness of unknown fields that might unwittingly shift our assumptions and hence we are able to see what we were previously taking for granted. Furthermore, I emphasise the need to develop a meta-reflexivity that asks about the ways of relating that we are enacting and what they are producing.

Originally, my conceptualisation of reflexivity is made with, not against, diffraction. I contend that we never find pure reflection or pure diffraction but different shades of them, as in a diffraction pattern. Moreover, I propose that when we hold diffraction as the superior term, we unavoidably betray our best intentions and reproduce the representationalism that we were so keen to avoid. I further elaborate the benefits of a diffracted reflexivity and of using meta-reflexivity with diffraction.

Throughout the thesis, I argue to regard different concepts and theories as more or less useful for particular contexts because of how they produce these very contexts. I value the theories in their productions rather than in their truth-value because there is not a world to discover but a production of worlds through practices of knowing. In coherence with this, I read the concept of experience through the lenses of existential phenomenology, poststructuralism and posthumanism. I let myself be taken by each of these traditions, opening up to what they produce. I, intra-actively with the three traditions – and my psychoanalytic background – arrive at an articulation of the concept of experience. I think of experience as an impersonal affect with its own force to produce us as subjectivities. This experience can be elaborated from the felt sense rather than from our cognition to enable a movement in our experience and in our ways of subjectivation. Finally, I assert that we do need to critically consider where this experience/affect is taking us because it can lead to reproduce dynamics that can be detrimental.

To conclude, in this thesis I grapple with reflexivity and experience to think differently about the practices of making sense of ourselves. In very broad terms, I would say that I have arrived at the following ideas: 1. In making sense of ourselves we are also producing ourselves. 2. We do not make sense intentionally and separately from our relational, affective, and material-discursive engagements. Strictly, it is not that ‘we’ make sense of ‘ourselves’, but a greater intra-active assemblage makes sense and produces ourselves and the world in that movement. 3. There is no way of neutrally judging which



ways of making sense and producing ourselves and the world are better or truer. 4. There is not a way to control the way in which we make sense, rather we 'find ourselves' making sense. And 5. Given the previous points, the only thing we can do is to be curious about how we are relating to ourselves when making sense and to wonder what that relating is producing.

## **Declaration**

I declare that the thesis has been composed solely by myself, and has not been submitted, in whole or in part, to any other degree or professional qualification.

Part of this work, specifically chapter four 'Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce' has been published in the journal *Qualitative Inquiry* as it is also indicated in the chapter itself. This paper has myself as the only author.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jacqueline Serra', with a stylized flourish at the end.

---

Jacqueline Karen Andrea Serra Undurraga

## **Acknowledgments**

I am immensely grateful for the space that my supervisors: Jonathan Wyatt and Liz Bondi, have provided me. They have given me the platform to think further, to go to new places with my thought. Their presence and thinking has been a constant companion in this journey and it is imprinted in my writing.

Without the funding that the University of Edinburgh has provided me with two scholarships: The Principal's Career Development Scholarship and the Edinburgh Global Research Scholarship, this project could not have been possible. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to find a new home in Edinburgh.

I am touched and grateful for the dedication of my partner, Zoi Simopoulou, who has read my writing so many times and generously shared with me her thoughts. I am grateful to my friend Candela Sanchez for her endless enthusiasm with my ideas that lifts me up; to my friend Eduardo Mora for his interest and keenness to read my work and think with it; and to my friend Camila de Mussy for her constant curiosity about how I am thinking.

Finally, I am thankful to my clients because through our work together I have been able to think, again and again, about what it entails to make sense of ourselves.

## Table of contents

Lay summary .....	3
Abstract .....	6
Declaration .....	9
Acknowledgments .....	10
Table of contents .....	11
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	15
A point of departure .....	17
My research frame .....	19
Overview of the thesis .....	23
What I kick against and what I contribute .....	25
Chapter 2: Methodology .....	29
Introduction .....	31
Onto-epistemology .....	33
Relational – not subjective – onto-epistemology .....	35
Knowing from within a world and producing worlds –worlding – through knowing .....	37
Ethico-onto-epistemology .....	40
Conceptualisations as opening lives .....	41
To create concepts that produce .....	44
What I have been doing .....	48
Becoming new ground – again and again .....	51
Using the authors .....	53
The Winnicottian use .....	56
Risking ontological insecurity .....	58
Conclusions .....	60
Chapter 3: Questioning our assumptions through yielding to foreignness ....	63
Introduction .....	65

How can we respond to the call of being reflexive about our assumptions?	68
We are never reflexive alone	70
Reflexivity emerging from mismatches: Bourdieu's perspective	73
Thinking about social fields as fluctuating with Foucault	77
Straying afield from oneself: Foucault's perspective	79
Stumbling against foreignness with Bourdieu	82
The need to yield to foreignness: Butler's emphasis	84
Conclusions	90
Chapter 4: Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce	95
Introduction	97
Implicit notions of subjectivity	101
Reflexivities producing subjectivities	103
Reflexivities as apparatuses	105
Different reflexivities producing differently	109
Useful reflexivities	116
Reflexivities operating outside our voluntary intention	117
Conclusions	119
Chapter 5: What if reflexivity and diffraction intra-act?	121
Introduction	123
Reflexivity	127
Diffraction by Haraway	131
Diffraction by Barad	134
My understanding and use of reflexivity	136
Blurring	139
Conclusion: Why blur the sharp division between reflexivity and diffraction?	145
Chapter 6: Betraying our best intentions: using meta-reflexivity with diffraction	149
Introduction	151

Derrida under erasure .....	153
An input from Deleuze and Guattari .....	156
Slippage .....	158
Using meta-reflexivity with Diffraction .....	161
Diffractioning reflexivity and my meta-reflexivity .....	168
Conclusion .....	171
Chapter 7: Re-thinking subjective experience .....	175
Introduction .....	177
Experience from existential-phenomenology .....	180
The reflective 'I' emerging from the pre-reflective experience .....	181
Focusing on the felt sense .....	185
Experience from poststructuralism .....	187
Butler, Foucault and Derrida .....	188
Does poststructuralism bury phenomenology? .....	191
Where does poststructuralism take me? .....	192
Experience through posthumanism .....	194
Some of the news that posthumanism brings .....	195
Subjectivity and affective experience .....	197
Re-thinking about subjective experience: Is there still space for it? .....	201
Finding ourselves in losing ourselves .....	202
Affect: a collective sense of intimacy .....	206
A different conceptualisation of subjective experience .....	210
Conclusion .....	213
Chapter 8: Overall Conclusions.....	217
Reflexivity and experience reconceptualised.....	220
Where does this take us/me? .....	223
References .....	233



# Chapter 1: Introduction





## **A point of departure**

I have a memory – or was it a dream? – from my early childhood. I was watching a cartoon in which there were two animals in a forest. One of them was keenly seeking something, the other one was just looking at him. At some point, the observer asked: ‘what are you looking for?’ The seeker answered: ‘I do not know, I will know when I find it.’

Where could I find a point of departure for this research? Should I know from the start what I am looking for? Even when stating ‘I am inquiring into the notion of making sense of ourselves’ I always find myself already *in the middle* (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007). When did I decide that making sense of ourselves will be my topic? How? It was not a rational and straightforward decision; at some moment, I just knew that this was my interest. When the ‘I’ is uttered, something of me is already there, already intermingled, already non-personal. The ‘I’ arrives late.

I could play to articulate a narrative about how my work as a psychotherapist motivated my inquiry about making sense of ourselves. I work with making sense, with the making sense of my clients, with the making sense of myself, with the use of myself for psychotherapeutic purposes; hence, it seems to follow that I would be interested in the processes of making sense. However, it feels forced to me to state that my research steams from my work as a psychotherapist. It would maybe be more reassuring to think that I knew all along what I was looking for in my inquiry in relation to my work but the truth is that I did not. To be clear, for sure, my work has to do with my inquiry, both of them move and motivate each other; however, my profession as a psychotherapist does not work as a definite foundation for my inquiry, nor the other way around. Instead, they become together and along a bunch of other things as my affective relationships, the texts that I read, the food that I eat, the landscapes that I inhabit and inhabit me and all of what is part of my situation.

I do not find a point of departure in a research question either; when I enunciate it, it is already born with my assumptions. Should I start with my assumptions, then? Are they the foundations in which my argument is elaborated? I do not think that my assumptions are an isolated virgin foundation; instead, they re-create themselves in my activities. Therefore, my assumptions are not *behind* my theories and my activities: they are fundamentally intermingled with them. Where should I start, then? Only a paradox can satisfy me: I cannot help starting in the middle. (Deleuze & Parnet, 2007)

Richardson (1994) reflects about how we have been taught to know in advance and then just write up, but *writing as a method of inquiry* embraces that in the very process of writing things get created and re-created. In contrast, traditionally:

The doer exists before the deed, so the researcher can (and must for IRBs) write a research proposal that outlines the doing before she begins. The assumption is that there is actually a beginning, an origin, that she is not always already becoming in entanglement. (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, p. 630)

A research proposal would assume that I know from the beginning so that would not allow much novelty and movement. I write this introduction, which outlines the full thesis, after having written at least a first draft of all my chapters and after deciding to not include some of them. The order and the coherence of the whole came at 'the end'. In a way, I look back at what I have done and I play with ways of knitting them together in a way that also makes each part become differently.

But an introduction, even if not a point of departure, serves a purpose, it is there for a reason, it works to produce something. An introduction opens something, starts something: introduces. *I introduce my work to you through the introduction. We start making a connection; maybe not our first connection, but a new connection. The connection is not with me, it is with my writing. I could say that I offer you this writing but that is not quite correct.* This writing

escapes me, goes beyond me. I do not have this writing in me, I do not own it as a possession that I have. As Bion (1970) argues from psychoanalysis, knowledge and thoughts are not something that we possess inside of us but something larger with a life of its own. This writing stretched me to be written, this writing made me differently. *What would this writing do to you – if anything?* I want my writing to do things but the things that my writing will end up doing are not mine to say. *I introduce you to my writing by telling you that I do not possess it.*

### **My research frame**

*So, let's do this. Let's 'start'. I will take off by telling you about how I am framing my research.* My research question could be: How do we make sense of ourselves? How are we reflexive about our experience? Nonetheless, there is no straightforward way to answer this question. Just as I announce it several others begin to emerge: What do I mean by *experience*? What is to *make sense*? What is *reflexivity*? What is a *self*? More crucially, the question about how we make sense of our experience assumes that we as subjects are in charge of the process of making sense. In that way, the question already puts forward a dualism between subject and experience, placing the subject in the active role. We could also wonder: How experience makes sense of us? How experience and sense-making *intra-act*<sup>1</sup>(Barad, 2007)? Furthermore, the question about how we make sense of ourselves takes for granted what making sense is, we are just asking *how* we do it. Maybe a better question would be: what is happening when we make sense – or fail to make sense – of ourselves? This question does a better job of not assuming what it is to

---

<sup>1</sup> Intra-action is a neologism introduced by Karen Barad (2003,2007) to differentiate it from interaction. Interaction points at two units relating with each other whereas intra-action points at how the relationship is ontologically prior. It is 'intra' because there is not an outside of the units but a relating as the space where the differentiations emerge: difference within. I define this concept in more detail in chapter 4 'Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce' in the section 'Reflexivities as apparatuses.'

The question that I posited would be pointing at how neither experience nor sense-making are units in themselves but they are constantly taking shape through intra-acting – that is, not through interacting that would assume that they are first units and then they relate.

make sense. But this new question still assumes a subject in charge of the making sense, although the way in which it is formulated might invite this assumption to be challenged.

The question about how we make sense, any question really, already implies a particular way of organising and conceptualising so it works in a way that closes my inquiry more than I need. Maybe I do not have a question – not an overarching one, at least. Instead, I am interested in opening up concepts, in troubling them. Particularly, I think that being reflexive about our experience – which is a way of making sense of ourselves – sets up a humanistic, cognitive, masterful and dualistic understanding of the process of making sense of ourselves. That is, a bounded human purposefully and cognitively is reflexive of their experience as if experience was something there to be made sense of.<sup>2</sup> I want to think about this differently, I want to propose an alternative conceptualisation of making sense of ourselves. To this aim, I will work to reconceptualise both reflexivity and experience. I could have chosen other concepts as my main targets. For example: *making sense*, *self*, *subjectivity*, *symbolisation* could have all been fruitful candidates and, to a great extent, these concepts are part of my reconceptualisations of reflexivity and experience. Retrospectively, I think that I chose reflexivity and experience because of the work that has been done with them in poststructural and posthumanist philosophies and their importance for psychotherapeutic theory and practice and qualitative inquiry. The expression *being reflexive about our experience* is almost a commonplace in qualitative inquiry and psychotherapy and I attempt with this work to arrive to a renewed understanding of it.

My work with reconceptualisations already involves particular ways of conceptualising; indeed, to frame my research as opening up concepts to reconceptualise them implies, for example, that I think of the concepts as things to be explored and not, say, to be discovered. This framing works well

---

<sup>2</sup> I think that both phrases ‘making sense of ourselves’ and ‘being reflexive about our experience’ and their variations enact this dichotomy between an active subject making sense or reflecting and a passive subject or experience.

to provide me more space for my inquiry, to not set up too tightly what I am going to do.

What will I do with these concepts? I will try to open them up, to play with them, to move them, to reconceptualise them, to *diffract*<sup>3</sup> (Barad, 2007) them through different theories. The theories that I will use are poststructuralism<sup>4</sup>, mainly through Foucault, Derrida and Butler; posthumanism<sup>5</sup> fundamentally through Barad and Deleuze and Guattari; and, to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis in a relational strand<sup>6</sup> through authors like Winnicott and Bion<sup>7</sup>.

I am not the master in this game; through playing with these concepts they also play with me, they also reconceptualise and re-make me. I take a concept, I take an author, I take a theory, and I explore where they take me. In the intra-action of the theories and myself, we both get constantly transformed, our boundaries shifting. It is not an interaction where the theories are over there

---

<sup>3</sup> Diffraction is a physical phenomenon where a wave finds a gap or an obstacle and gets bended. In the double-slit experiment, two waves get diffracted and then they interfere and superpose with each other resulting in a diffraction pattern in which there are no absolutes or discrete groupings but a pattern that cannot be pinned down in parts. For example, light waves diffracted with the double-slit experiment produce a diffraction pattern that has light in the shadows and shadows in the dark. Barad (2007) draws on Haraway (1997) to use diffraction to trouble the reliance on the optical metaphor of reflection that wants to represent (to mirror) how things are, while diffraction is about the difference that is produced (the diffraction pattern). To diffract the concepts refers not to take them as representations of something out there, but to see what they produce, where they can take us. When I diffract a concept through different theories, I read them with these other theories to see what it is produced that will be different from what I started with. I define diffraction in detail in chapter 5 'What if reflexivity and diffraction intra-act?' In the sections 'Diffraction by Haraway' and 'Diffraction by Barad'

<sup>4</sup> By poststructuralism, drawing on Harcourt (2007), I am referring to the theories that reject the phenomenological notion that meaning is a subjective enterprise. Instead of this, they both draw on and trouble the structuralist understanding that meaning is derived from wider social structures that the subject unconsciously enacts. They are different from structuralism in that they emphasise the spaces of ambiguity and the constant possibility of subversion of the norms. I elaborate more on this theory especially in chapter 3 'Questioning our assumptions through yielding to foreignness' and in chapter 8 'Re-thinking about subjective experience', specifically in the section 'Experience from poststructuralism.'

<sup>5</sup> By posthumanism, I am referring to the theories that trouble the boundedness of the human not only in discursive terms but also in material terms. I thematise the term posthumanism in chapter 8 'Re-thinking about subjective experience', especially in the section 'Experience from posthumanism.'

<sup>6</sup> When I refer to a relational strand in psychoanalysis, I am speaking, broadly, of theories that think of the subject as always part of a relational matrix.

<sup>7</sup> This is far from being an exhaustive list of the theories that I use. For example, I also make use of existential phenomenology and Bourdieu's theory. Nonetheless, I have included the theories that I use throughout the thesis and are not reduced to a specific part of it.

and I am over here, both of us well defined. More than understanding them, we become together. This is a theoretical thesis and I use the theories to take me to places, to be my springboard, to move me, to shake me, to challenge me.

And my research did take me to places, it led me to draw substantively less from what I was expecting on psychoanalysis and other philosophical strands as existential phenomenology. The research proposal for being admitted in this PhD was on reconceptualising symbolisation mainly through relational psychoanalysis and existential phenomenology. However, the fundamentally psychotherapeutic question about what entails to symbolise our experience in the warmth of affective relationships shifted to the questions about how making sense of ourselves is not only enabled relationally with other people but also in a social, material and cultural milieu that is producing ourselves as subjectivities. The theories that captured my attention – the texts that draw me to read them – were not the ones that I had originally in mind; I feel that I was taken and I have worked in making something out of these surprising encounters.

This emphasis on how the conceptualisations *do* things, how they take me to places, how they produce me differently, how they articulate different worlds, places the writing and the conceptualisations as part of the world, becoming with it. Not only does my conceptualising produce me differently and articulate a different world but conceptualising is not apart from my *material-discursive*<sup>8</sup> (Barad, 2003, 2007) involvement in the world. That is, the conceptualisations that I am able to produce are not only the product of my reading, but of my political engagements, affective relationships, health, institutional practices,

---

<sup>8</sup> According to Barad (2003, 2007) the material and the discursive are always already entangled, that is why it is material-discursive. It is not that the discursive has an impact on the material or is supported by it but that the discursive is always already material and the other way around. Matter is not passive but always in process of becoming; this becoming is not separated from discursive practices. Discursive practices are always a material process of reconfiguring the world. Material-discursive practices do not assume a separation between material and discursive, but assert that these differentiations are intra-actively produced.

and so on. With my conceptualising produced by, and producing, different worlds, including myself, this theoretical thesis will bring myself, my situations, to the paper and thus to view.

Deleuze (1995) calls to not read/write as a representation of something else, as if a book, say, had an especial value; instead, he proposes to read/write as if a book is part of the world and connects with other things; it is possible because of other things and produces things. "Writing is one flow among others, with no special place in relation to the others, that comes into relations of current, countercurrent, and eddy with other flows-flows of shit, sperm, words, action, eroticism, money, politics, and so on." (Deleuze, 1995, p. 8)

My writing is made in the middle of things *and you read it in the middle of things*. In these years my writing moved with my life, it curved with the intensities of my relationships, it transformed my engagements, it was shaken by the unexpected. *And I imagine you reading this as another thing in your life, connecting with all that is around, producing new things through these connections. I am curious to know where you are, reader; where you have taken my writing, how my writing will become differently connecting with you and all of what is producing you at this moment.*

## **Overview of the thesis**

The thesis is organised in relation to the concepts that I am exploring: reflexivity and experience. As I said, I am framing this research as aiming to think differently about being reflexive about our experience – which is a way of making sense of ourselves – through reconceptualising reflexivity and experience. The thesis has eight chapters. The first is what you are reading now, the introduction. The second one is the methodology chapter. Following that, the next four chapters (chapter number three, four, five, and six) are about reflexivity. The seventh chapter is on the reconceptualisation of experience. Finally, chapter eight is the overall conclusions chapter.

In the methodology chapter (number two), I explore my ethico-onto-epistemology and how to think about the activity of conceptualising and



reconceptualising. I set up a diffractive way of relating to the concepts and theories and I propose to *use* the authors in the Winnicottian (1971) sense, that is, precisely, the contrary to an instrumental use; it is a way of relating to them acknowledging their otherness, appreciating that I cannot grasp them as if I could totally manage them. I say that my methodology is *conceptualising for becoming differently*. Subsequently, in the next four chapters (number three, four, five, and six) about reflexivity, I question traditional understandings of the concept that situate it as an individual and intentional activity trying to capture and represent what is already there. Specifically, in chapter three: *Questioning our assumptions through yielding to foreignness*, I articulate that being reflexive, in the sense of questioning our assumptions, is enabled by yielding to foreignness. Drawing on Foucault (1990) and Butler (2005), how we are reflexive about ourselves is socially given and so I bring Bourdieu (1977, 1993) to propose that we need to yield to the foreignness of different social fields to be able to reflexively question our assumptions. In chapter four: *Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce*, using Barad (2007), I propose a conceptualisation of reflexivity as ways of relating to ourselves that produce our subjectivity and the world in that movement. Through this proposition, I develop a relational conceptualisation of reflexivity that produces its own contexts. I offer a meta-reflexivity that interrogates in which ways we are relating and what is that producing. In the final two chapters about reflexivity, I play with the concepts of reflexivity and diffraction. Specifically, in chapter five: *What if reflexivity and diffraction intra-act?* I show how these concepts are not as differentiated as they are portrayed in the literature and I argue for the necessity of troubling the conceptualisations that situate one term as the superior one. In chapter six: *Betraying our best intentions: using meta-reflexivity with diffraction*, I argue how it is inevitable that we betray our best intentions and slip into what we are outwardly rejecting. I emphasise the relevance of assuming this vulnerability and through that think about how the different practices and concepts (reflexivity and diffraction) can diffract each other, generating novelty. Chapter number seven is on experience, it is called:

*Re-thinking subjective experience.* I develop the concept of experience through different traditions: existential-phenomenology, poststructuralism and posthumanism to see how it gets articulated and what these conceptualisations produce – what they are good for. I finish by articulating a conceptualisation of experience that makes novel use of the three traditions and my psychoanalytic background. The last chapter (number eight), unsurprisingly, is the conclusions chapter, where I attempt to articulate what my research does.

I would like to notice that throughout the thesis I am using concepts that might need defining for clarification. Since the beginning of the thesis, I have attempted to include a footnote with a definition the first time that a concept that I regard as needing further definition is mentioned.

### **What I kick against and what I contribute**

Throughout this thesis, I am pushing against boundedness, that is, against the notion that humans are individuals with set boundaries. In this notion, humans are influenced by, and influence, other people, society, knowledge and material conditions, but these influencing processes are thought as between bounded units, as if we were coming into relation to other external factors. Instead, drawing on Barad (2007), in this thesis, humans are produced by, and produce, material-discursive practices; the boundaries are not set but always in the process of being formed. I am also pushing against masterfulness, that is, against the notion that we can intentionally and cognitively control and decide to make sense in particular ways. In contrast, I put forward how we always *find ourselves* making sense in particular ways precisely because we are always part of a greater arrangement and not a bounded individual that can account for themselves.

I put forward that in making sense of ourselves, we produce ourselves not from a mastery position but as part of something wider that we are becoming with and we cannot control or hold in our minds. In that sense, I propose an ethics of yielding to be taken by how different material-discursive arrangements

produce us differently, an adventure of finding ourselves becoming as we were not expecting. This also entails the need to meta-reflexively<sup>9</sup> considering how we are relating to ourselves and the world assuming that we are always liable to betray our best intentions and purposes.

Crucially, in coherence with a relational and performative onto-epistemology<sup>10</sup>, I am proposing to relate to the concepts and theories looking to see what they do, what they produce, what they enable, rather than relating to them judging their accuracy – even though, this proposition, paradoxically, considers the realist way of relating as enabling and useful in some contexts because of what it produces. I strongly believe that this emphasis in the productions can help to enable more openness to diversity and to become otherwise in the academy, in our professional lives and life in general.

As well as drawing from different fields my research contributes to different fields. The field of psychotherapy is one of these. The reconceptualisations of reflexivity and experience speak to psychotherapy, a profession that constantly requires us to both use ourselves reflexively as psychotherapists and facilitate a more enabling manner for the clients to reflexively relate to themselves. Furthermore, these reconceptualisations ask for re-workings in the notion of psychotherapy. Even if throughout the thesis I elaborate on some of these implications, this re-thinking of psychotherapy is something that needs a piece of work on its own to be adequately developed. I feel keen to open this exploration in further research. My research also contributes to conversations around qualitative methodology, especially in the chapter on methodology and in all the chapters about reflexivity. Finally, I contribute to poststructural and posthuman philosophies, specifically in the conceptualisation of subjectivity.

---

<sup>9</sup> I use the word *meta-reflexivity* when I refer to an intentional and conscious process of bringing attention to how we are reflexively relating to ourselves and the world. This distinction follows from my conceptualisation of reflexivity as a constant and unintentional process of relating to ourselves and producing ourselves and the world in that movement as I develop in chapter four.

<sup>10</sup> I develop what I mean by this in the methodology chapter (chapter two).

This is developed throughout the thesis, in all the chapters, but especially in chapter seven on experience.

The contributions that I make to these fields are marked by my interdisciplinary approach. I am a psychotherapist oriented towards relational theories in psychoanalysis and so my inputs in philosophy and qualitative methodologies are informed and enriched by my psychoanalytic background. Conversely, the contributions that I can make to psychotherapy and psychoanalysis are permeated by my dwelling in poststructural and posthuman philosophies and their impact on qualitative methodologies.

In the next chapter, chapter two, I develop my methodology. I elaborate on my ontology, epistemology and ethics and my way of understanding the concepts and the processes of conceptualisation that are vital for my project as it aims at reconceptualising reflexivity and experience.



## **Chapter 2: Methodology**



## Introduction

My topic is making sense of ourselves. I wonder about how to articulate differently the notion of *being reflexive about our experience* – which is a way of *making sense of ourselves*. These sentences already imply certain conceptualisations of both reflexivity and experience that posit them in a duality of active-passive. For instance, the phrase *being reflexive about our experience* poses a duality between active and passive; language-based and feeling-based: we are reflexive (actively, purposefully, and through language) *about* our experience (passive and probably related to feelings). It is my main objective to think differently about making sense, challenging this dominant perspective. Towards this aim, I reconceptualise reflexivity and experience. I do not intend to define these concepts in a fixed manner, to say what these concepts ‘are’ but to open them up – to diffract (Barad, 2007) them – through three different traditions: posthumanism, poststructuralism and, to a lesser extent, psychoanalysis in a relational strand. When diffracting the concepts through the different traditions, I am not interested in what these concepts ‘really mean’ but to transform them by reading them through different traditions. The objective of doing this is to be able to arrive to different ways of articulating these concepts and so to think differently – and produce differently – what happens when making sense of ourselves. The concepts are not there as reflections of the world but as producing worlds. I am not worried about their truth-value but about what differences they make, where they take me, how they produce a different making sense, different selves and different worlds.

An important concept that is present throughout my thesis is the notion of self or subjectivity<sup>11</sup>. Indeed, when we are making sense of *ourselves*, how am I to

---

<sup>11</sup> In this thesis, I am using the words self and subject. I am not positing a clear-cut distinction between them but when I am using self, I am pointing more to a personal and intimate self and when I am using subject, I am stressing more how the subject is traversed by the social. This emphasis is described in (Avdi & Georgaca, 2010) where they associate the self with a phenomenological and humanistic tradition and the subject with psychoanalysis and poststructuralism. Having said this, this division is far from being clean, Foucault refers largely to the self in his later works and psychoanalysis also refers to the self.



think about this self? When I look at both of the concepts that I mentioned above: reflexivity and experience, I am implicitly, and many times explicitly, thinking about the conceptualisation of subjectivity or self that they imply and that they produce. In fact, I am using the ‘I’ throughout this thesis, how this ‘I’ is understood (and self and subjectivity) are shifting while I conceptualise and reconceptualise.

In this chapter I will speak about how I am doing my research, that is, what is commonly understood as methodology. My way of working is to open up these three concepts to be thought about in different ways. I use the different theories as my springboards that diffract my understanding of the concepts so I can get to fresh ways of articulating them and through that to produce my subjectivity and the world anew. In that way, I could think about my methodology as a diffractive methodology (Barad, 2007; Haraway, 1992, 1997; Murris & Bozalek, 2019). If I think about methodology in the traditional sense as knowing from the start what I am looking for and how to go about it, then, I also think about my methodology as a non-methodology. Along these lines, I will also elaborate how my methodology resonates with St. Pierre’s (2018) postqualitative inquiry, Jackson and Mazzei’s (2012b) thinking with theory and Jackson’s (2017) thinking without a method among others.

This is an inquiry that looks to reconceptualise but that does not mean that it stays at a conceptual level – understood as divorced from life. To the contrary, as I will develop, the concepts are not separated from life; concepts articulate life and can produce new forms of living. If I play to put a name to my methodology, it would be: *conceptualising for becoming differently*.

In what follows I articulate my methodology that I have named *conceptualising for becoming differently*. I start with my onto-epistemology. Then I delve in my understanding of concepts. Finally, I spell out more directly my way of working, including how I use the concepts. For articulating my methodology, I mostly draw on posthumanist authors and also in Winnicott and Winnicottian authors from psychoanalysis.

## Onto-epistemology

Ontological and epistemological questions populate the whole of my text. It does not feel right to constrain these questions to some paragraphs as if it was a straightforward statement of identity: my ontology is x and my epistemology is y. My onto-epistemological position is in a constant process of being formed and transformed. My research interest about how we are reflexive about our experience is in itself both an ontological and an epistemological inquiry. What is reflexivity? What is experience? How do we practice reflexivity? How can I articulate answers to that? Throughout my thesis, I am thinking and elaborating – again and again – about ontology and epistemology.

Hence, I will not state here my onto-epistemological stance as if it was something previous to my work – a position from which I approach my research. Indeed, this is one of the last sections that I write. In contrast, I think that my onto-epistemological perspective is constantly emerging and shifting while I work. Consequently, I will use this space to think about the onto-epistemological position that I have been developing throughout this work. This does not mean that what I state here is pinning down what my onto-epistemological position *is*. The account that I give here cannot be but a temporal ground; in any re-reading, my work *plugs in*<sup>12</sup> (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) with all of what is present at the moment, and continuously becomes differently.

Inevitably, I have *shown* something about my onto-epistemological position in what you have already read. For example, I have been using the word onto-epistemology and that already says something about my ontological and epistemological position. Inspired by Barad (2007), I put ontology and epistemology in a single word to denote how knowing and meaning are

---

<sup>12</sup> Following Deleuze and Guattari (1983,1987), I use plug in to describe connections that can be done at any level and that the main objective of them is to see what they produce. Deleuze and Guattari (1983) give the example of a handyman plugging in something into an electric socket and enjoying the satisfaction of what it produces.

precisely produced from within certain situation/relation/material arrangements and how knowing actually produces the realities that it is set up to discover.

My onto-epistemology is *relational*. Intra-action (Barad, 2007) is a good concept to speak about my relational perspective. Intra-action asserts that nothing exists by itself; there are no bounded units that then come into relation. Instead, the units are constantly formed through relations (including the relations with the non-human). Different ways of relating are continuously producing what we take as already formed units. In that way, my onto-epistemology is also *performative* or *productive*. Different ways of relating produce what we could have taken as bounded units.

As it might be already apparent, I am drawing on both Deleuze and Barad. I think about their conceptualisations as compatible as both emphasise how things are always in the making, including human and non-human, and they underscore the productions of the concepts rather than to try to get to what they ‘are.’

Nonetheless, clearly, they have differences that go well beyond the scope of the thesis, not to say of the methodology chapter, to be thoroughly explored and analysed. For instance, Hein (2016) underscores that Barad and Deleuze have incommensurable ontologies. He thinks about Barad as having a philosophy of transcendence and identity and Deleuze of immanence and *positive difference* – referring to the processes of differentiating rather than difference as to how something is different from another thing. For example, Hein argues that Barad’s concept of intra-action does not start from positive difference. “As discussed earlier, positive difference is not fixed (i.e., it does not have a single identity), and it therefore differs even from itself. As a process of continual differentiation, it exceeds all concepts, including intra-action.” (Hein, 2016, p. 136)

Murris and Bozalek (2019) respond to Hein (2016) arguing that Barad does posit a perspective of immanence and positive difference, because in her account everything is in process of being formed including space, time and

matter. I align with this argument and throughout the thesis I think about Barad's and Deleuze's conceptualisations as compatible inasmuch both have a relational perspective which is not reduced to the human relationships but includes the material and the discursive as having their own strength and active participation. Both theories are processual where any identity is understood as a necessarily temporal crystallisation only sustained in a greater *assemblage*<sup>13</sup> or intra-action.

In the following section, I will differentiate this relational and productive onto-epistemology from an ontology of bounded units that only afterwards come into relations. It is this ontology of bounded units that underpins the separation between ontology and epistemology and the distinctions between objectivism and subjectivism.

### ***Relational – not subjective – onto-epistemology***

According to Barad's (2007) conceptualisation, the dichotomies of matter and meaning, objectivism and subjectivism, realism and relativism are the reason why it makes sense to separate ontology and epistemology.

The realism-antirealism distinction is often drawn on the basis of questions about belief in a correspondence theory of truth, which is rooted in subject-object, culture-nature, word-world dualisms. The separation of epistemology from ontology is a reverberation of these dualisms. (Barad, 2007, p. 125)

The division between ontology and epistemology implies that what exists is already formed and that is why we need to be worried about epistemology, that is, about the possibility of knowing what there is. The mainstream conceptualisation of knowledge is that it is concerned with understanding an outer and objective reality. The extent to which this approach is seen as the

---

<sup>13</sup> According to Colebrook (2002) – A Deleuzian reader - assemblage refers to how life as a process constantly needs connections. Anything – a body, a city, a group, etc. - is the product of connections and not the other way around. That is, the connections are ontologically prior to any unit. The assemblage does not act as a unit or an organism with clear characteristics and objectives because what is primordial are the ongoing connections. "There is no finality, end or order that would govern the assemblage as a whole; the law of any assemblage is created from its connections." (Colebrook, 2002, p. xx)

valid way of knowing can be assessed realising that the very word epistemology comes from the word *Episteme* (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Episteme implicates a fundamental division between subject and object, this differentiation is the one that allows knowledge to be objective – if we are part of the phenomenon studied we cannot be objective. Therefore, deeply rooted in our assumptions is the belief that we are knowing something objective and enclosed in itself.

In contrast, I think that the practices of knowing and what exists are intermingled. Hence, I am not an objectivist. If I am not objectivist, if I believe that I cannot help but be involved in my research, does that mean that I think that every perspective is equally valid because all is *subjective* and *relative*? I think that both of these positions: subjectivism and objectivism depend on an ontology of bounded units. I can only say that something is subjective if I think about subjectivity as something already formed, as something in itself. Similarly, Flyvbjerg (2001) differentiates what he calls the relativistic position from contextualism; positing that from a contextualist position it does not make sense to say that everything is subjective because there are historical and cultural backgrounds that frame what is deemed possible: “anyone who equates contextualism with relativism’s ‘anything goes’ should imagine trying to ask the Romans to abolish slavery” (Flyvbjerg, 2001, p. 100). That is, we cannot understand a subjectivity outside of its context.

If we say that any statement is equally valid to others, we are not considering the historical and social contexts in which particular discourses are seen as more valid than others. Hence, if we are subjectivists, as described before, we have not changed our dualistic assumptions. Inspired by Rorty (1991), I say that the very conception of relativism (as subjectivism) can only be possible with a dualistic assumption of an external reality and a subjective perception of it, that is, with realism. Relative or subjective is antonym with objective, they need each other. If we say *contextualism* (Flyvbjerg, 2001), or *relational*, we assume that there cannot be either universal objectivity or bounded

subjectivity. The notion of subjective rests in a consideration of subjectivity as bounded in one individual.

In contrast, I think that we are constantly relationally, socially and materially produced as subjects. As Haraway says: “Ontologically heterogeneous partners become who and what they are in relational material-semiotic worlding. Natures, cultures, subjects, and objects do not preexist their intertwined worldings” (Haraway, 2016, pp. 12-13). What we are is constantly being produced relationally. This relationality is material-semiotic because the meaning is produced in tandem with a material articulation.

### ***Knowing from within a world and producing worlds –worlding – through knowing***

I do not think that I access knowledge as if I was an already bounded subjectivity that interacts with what I aim to know. Instead, drawing on Barad (2007), I think that the practices of knowing cannot but be understood as emerging from being within a particular world that intra-acts (with)<sup>14</sup> me. And secondly, I argue that these practices of knowing produce a world – including my own subjectivity.

With Barad, we know – meaning is produced – through certain situations/relations/discourses/material arrangements. Foucault (1972, 1980) already said that what we produce as knowledge responds to certain discourses that are ruling our field. Barad (2007), takes Foucault’s contribution and puts emphasis in stating that discourse is not separated from matter. The discursive practices are always already material and the other way around.

In other words, materiality is discursive (i.e., material phenomena are inseparable from the apparatuses of bodily production; matter emerges out of, and includes as part of its being, the ongoing reconfiguring of boundaries), just as discursive practices are always already material (i.e., they are ongoing material [re]configurings of the world). Discursive

---

<sup>14</sup> I bracket the word ‘with’ because it implies the union of two or more distinct entities, whereas the concept of intra-action is emphasising how the entities are always in the process of being formed. If the sentence is read without the word ‘with’, it can convey intra-acting as an action that directly shapes an entity (in this case myself).

practices and material phenomena do not stand in a relationship of externality to each other; rather, *the material and the discursive are mutually implicated in the dynamics of intra-activity*. (151-152)

Barad (2007) takes this point from quantum theory<sup>15</sup>, especially with the contributions of Niels Bohr. His approach to resolving the wave-particle duality paradox (that an electron could behave as both a wave and a particle in different measuring instances), is to argue that these two concepts acquire their meaning through specific apparatuses. That is, one of the material arrangements – the apparatus – that is trying to measure the electron produces it as a wave, and a different material arrangement – a different apparatus – produces it as a particle. “For Bohr, the analysis of these conditions rests on the crucial insight that concepts are meaningful, that is, semantically determinate, not in the abstract but by virtue of their embodiment in the physical arrangement of the apparatus.” (Barad, 2007, p. 117)

This implies that the concepts that we use are not a reflection of the world, the concepts are part of the material arrangements of the world. This underscores an *immanent* perspective in the sense that there are not two worlds one of material reality and phenomena and another of our representations of them. Concepts and matter are entangled and producing each other continuously.

This point stresses not only that our knowledge is embodied – as existential phenomenology does (Merleau-Ponty, 2012)<sup>16</sup> – but that what we know, the world that we ‘see’, is articulated/produced through the *apparatus* through which we aim to know. The things that exist take their shape in our approaching/producing them. And, our way of approaching is enabled by discourse and culture – that are also material arrangements.

The frames of reference, or the apparatuses, that we inevitably – and largely unconsciously – use in every activity, including researching, are the ones that are useful to describe, make sense or explain what is happening. These

---

<sup>15</sup> A question that could be posed to Barad is about how is she relating to quantum theory? Is she giving special truth value to this theory because it is ‘scientific’?

<sup>16</sup> The original year of this publication (in French) is 1945.

frames are useful, but they do not produce objective knowledge. We are very used to think that cancer, for example, is a real thing out there. I think cancer is the name that has been given to a particular dynamic that has been produced through certain theories, methodologies and apparatuses to approach the body. We could certainly have other apparatuses that would be useful as well, in other ways.

I am not saying that cancer does not exist, I am saying that it does not exist by itself. It is not that the materiality of cancer does not exist or is secondary to abstract or intangible aspects – like some popular narratives that claim that cancer could vanish with certain attitudes, or that emotions or energies could produce and eradicate it. In contrast, there is something there affecting the body but what it is, is indeterminate until a conceptual and material apparatus comes to produce the boundaries that will define it and make it meaningful.

It is in this way that through knowing we also produce a world. As Barad (2007) makes clear what is ontologically prior is *phenomena* where everything is connected in process and nothing is defined as a unity: there are no boundaries drawn. What can draw the boundaries are apparatuses that enact *agential cuts*<sup>17</sup> within *phenomena*, defining entities in their ontic and semantic nature.

Apparatuses enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of “entities” within phenomena, where “phenomena” are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components. That is agential cuts are at once ontic and semantic. It is only through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of “components” of phenomena become determinate and that particular articulations become meaningful. In the absence of specific agential intra-actions, these ontic-semantic boundaries are indeterminate. In short, the apparatus specifies an agential cut that enacts a resolution (within the phenomenon) of the semantic, as well as ontic,

---

<sup>17</sup> Barad (2007) conceptualises agential cut to refer to the boundary that is produced within a particular configuration and that enables the, always temporary, emergence of entities. The concept agential cut assumes that these boundaries are always shifting and in process. Matter is agentic it is always in movement and not simply divided in distinct units that we can disentangle.



indeterminacy. Hence apparatuses are boundary making practices. (p. 148)

This perspective puts forward that these practices of knowing produce a world in that these practices enact the agential cuts that will define the boundaries of what we take as existing and meaningful<sup>18</sup>. And, as I was saying earlier, it also underscores that our ways of knowing are materially-discursively enabled. We know through being part of determinate intra-actions. We cannot know from the vacuum or from a neutral place. This implies an immanent perspective because there are not two worlds: the one of representations and the one of materiality. There are not, on the one hand, discourses and, on the other hand, material arrangements. Instead, they cannot be understood without each other, they emerge intra-actively. Knowing is not an activity that we make to represent a world as if the researcher and the researched were already defined and then would just interact. Instead, we can only know through being from within a world and our practices of knowing are also producing this very world – including our subjectivities.

To conclude, my onto-epistemological perspective has temporarily crystallized as relational, productive and immanent. All of what there is, is in relation, there are no bounded individualities. Different ways of relating are constantly producing/performing what we see as units and realities; and there is not a separate world for representations and another for things, but the concepts are already entangled in material arrangements and producing worlds.

### ***Ethico-onto-epistemology***

Because each conceptualisation is productive of different realities it matters ethically; we need to wonder about which kind of world we are producing, about what we are enabling. Barad (2007) speaks about ethico-onto-epistemology to foreground how, not only ontology and epistemology, but also ethics, are entangled with each other.

---

<sup>18</sup> I delve more in this understanding in chapter four: *Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce*.

With this, the ethical dimension in my own work is opened, firstly, in what the reconceptualisations that I put forward produce, that is, in what they enable. Of course, the productions of my reconceptualisations go well beyond my intentions, but it is necessary that I wonder what I am helping to produce. I am thinking about this throughout my thesis.

Secondly, in undertaking this research, I am affected and I become differently through the exploration of theories and the reconceptualisation of concepts; my research entails an ethical dimension in how I become differently through it. I am continuously exploring how I find myself differently and what does this enable and prevents me from doing/exploring.

Thirdly, because I understand my research as entangled with my life, some aspects of my life appear in my writing from time to time, including my work as a psychotherapist. In this scenario, it is relevant for me to ask what do these narrations produce and if they might negatively affect someone. Having this last concern in mind, whenever I mention a client I am not directly exposing one concrete experience with them/of them but I am drawing on more than one client to make a composite that ends up in a product that not even the client could recognise as its own – even though they could think that it is related to something of theirs. In relation to narrating events of my personal life, I have taken care of only referring to situations that the people involved and myself feel comfortable to share.

### **Conceptualisations as opening lives**

In consonance with my relational, immanent and productive ethico-onto-epistemology, I cannot think about concepts as separated from my life. I relate with the concepts<sup>19</sup>, and in that relating, I produce. This puts forward a way of working that is alive and always in movement. *Conceptualising for becoming differently*. As Gale (2018) articulates, the word concept might convey

---

<sup>19</sup> It is important to say here that I notice that I am speaking about concepts as if they were a bounded thing. I do not think that a concept stands on its own but that it is made meaningful in specific ways through its intra-actions. (Barad 2007)

something more static as an already formed product that can be applied, whereas conceptualisation or conceptualising points at the activity of creating concepts. “In contrast ‘conceptualisation’ seems to be more about working with the concepts themselves, constantly bringing them to life, thinking about them and engaging in a doing with them that always involves something new, experimental, processual and transmutational.” (Gale, 2018, p. 10)

I cannot think of my methodology as something bounded in itself that I need to follow. What I want to do, what I like to do, is to think with the concepts: to conceptualise and reconceptualise. To read an author and be taken by them, to start seeing, feeling and living the world differently. What causes me most pleasure is to read a text that rocks my world, that opens new worlds, that makes me differently, that re-writes and re-tells my history. Texts can be that powerful. A text intra-acts (Barad, 2007) (with) me and we become together differently; the texts shift through me, I shift through them, and the world shifts in that becoming. *Conceptualising for becoming differently.*

I take the concepts of reflexivity and experience for them to be opened up and diffracted through other concepts/theories. In this endeavour, I am also being diffracted and becoming differently. My work is an adventure through encountering a new author – a new concept – that will take me somewhere else; it is a risk, to be sure, but a risk that I want to take, that I need to take, that I am obsessed with taking. So, how do I go about to do this?

Traditional qualitative inquiry with its emphasis on methodology does not allow the space for exploring and experimenting with concepts because it sets up from the beginning what the process is like and what we should attempt to find. (Jackson, 2017; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012b; Mazzei, 2017; St. Pierre, 2018, 2019)

I cannot assume that I am a bounded and rational being that can delineate a research proposal and then follow through the steps. What is more, this option is not coherent with a relational, productive and immanent onto-epistemology.

If we cease to privilege knowing over being; if we refuse positivist and phenomenological assumptions about the nature of lived experience and the world; if we give up representational and binary logics; if we see language, the human, and the material not as separate entities mixed together but as a completely imbricated “on the surface” – if we do all that and the “more” it will open up - will qualitative inquiry as we know it be possible? Perhaps not. (Lather & St. Pierre, 2013, pp. 629-630)

The notion of qualitative inquiry with a set methodology is not appealing to me and I am not alone in this quest. There are a few authors speaking about researching without a methodology in the social sciences. When I read them, my methodology – without a methodology – can write itself more easily. St. Pierre (2018, 2019) speaks of post-qualitative inquiry, Jackson and Mazzei (2012b) speak of *thinking with theory*, Jackson (2017) of *thinking without method*, Mazzei (2017) of *minor inquiry*, Lenz Taguchi (2016) of the *concept as a method*, Wyatt (2019) of *creative-relational inquiry*, Gale (2018) of *madness as methodology*.

For example, Jackson and Mazzei (2012b) reconceptualise qualitative inquiry not assuming that they are already formed observers that can analyse the narratives of their participants. In contrast, they propose to plug in (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) data and theory; the interviews, the theories, their memories, etc. are all becoming together without one having precedence over the other. Therefore, they were not using their participant's accounts as the truth of their experiences but as an input that they could take to play with and make a new proposition. “There is nothing pure about what they told us, yet we needed their “stories” to knead the dynamics among philosophy, theory, and social life to see what gets made, not understood.” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012b, p. 3)

Wyatt (2019) speaks about the creative-relational inquiry as a process that is creative not (only) in the sense of being artistic but of opening up to what might become; not to capture and control but to let yourself be taken by the process. Gale (2018) foregrounds that in a way he has a non-methodology – madness

as methodology - because in the spaces of *going off the rails* something new can start living.

All these authors – drawing heavily on Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari and Barad – propose to think with the concepts, to think about them not as reflections or representations of the world but as productive of different worlds. A new concept, or a reconceptualisation of an old one, can make appear – can produce – a whole different world. This is what I see as the thirst of this non-methodology of thinking with theory: to produce different worlds. *Conceptualising for becoming differently.*

That is why a traditional qualitative methodology cannot do. I need to be able to get immersed and lost in the theories that I read and let them transform me and to produce new conceptualisations through this. *Conceptualising for becoming differently.*

St. Pierre (2018) connects her post-qualitative inquiry with thinking without method (Jackson, 2017) and with minor inquiry (Mazzei, 2017) as requiring what Deleuze and Partner (2007) describe as a long preparation – reading and writing – that does not have any recipe or method. Precisely, I can say that what I concretely do is to read a lot and to write a lot. I do these activities in a particular way. I create this work and at the same time this work is creating itself in me and this work is also creating me. To be able to create, I need not be a master, not a submissive disciple, but I need to *surrender* to the process. With psychoanalysis, I am using surrender meaning to let go to something larger than us – something that we cannot cognitively pin down – and letting ourselves be transformed by it. (Bollas, 1987)

### ***To create concepts that produce***

Massumi in his Foreword to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* beautifully captures the emphasis in what a concept can *do* instead of its truth-value – as if we could arrive at an objective answer, as if the concept was there to reflect the world. He says:

The question is not: is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it make it possible to think? What new emotions does it make it possible to feel? What new sensations and perceptions does it open in the body? (Massumi, 1987, p. xv)

My work requires my involvement. I lend myself to it, to be moved and transformed by it. I surrender to it. This resonates with postqualitative inquiry: “In other words, the post qualitative researcher must live the theories (will not be able not to live them) and will, then, live in a different world enabled by a different ethico-onto-epistemology” (St. Pierre, 2018, p. 604). The world and the subject are not fundamentally separated, in that sense, it is not only the world but myself what shifts in this type of inquiry. The bounded subject is not the origin or creator of the work because my boundaries are constantly producing themselves through my involvement in my work. It is in that way that it makes sense to say that this work is also writing itself through me – I am not writing from a position of mastery. St. Pierre (2019) says that the concept post-qualitative inquiry wrote itself in 2010 while writing a chapter for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the handbook of Qualitative Inquiry. There is not an author writing a text as if text and author were bounded entities, one in control of another. Instead, we become together.

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1994), the task of philosophy is to create concepts. To create concepts does not refer to grasp something that was always already there waiting to be discovered but to produce it. “Concepts are not waiting for us ready-made, like heavenly bodies. There is no heaven for concepts. They must be invented, fabricated, or rather created and would be nothing without their creator's signature.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 5)

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1994), to create concepts is always to bring something new and singular – because it is not reflecting a transcendental state of affairs but results from a production. That the concepts depend on their creator's signature brings about the possibility of questioning them: concepts did not create themselves, they are not ‘objective’, so they must be criticised and transformed. This does not entail that the creator of the

concept is the master over it. The concept is created and at the same time, it creates itself.

Philosophers have not been sufficiently concerned with the nature of the concept as philosophical reality. They have preferred to think of it as a given knowledge or representation that can be explained by the faculties able to form it (abstraction or generalization) or employ it (judgment). But the concept is not given, it is created; it is to be created. It is not formed but posits itself in itself-it is a self-positing. Creation and self positing mutually imply each other because what is truly created, from the living being to the work of art, thereby enjoys a self-positing of itself, or an autopoietic characteristic by which it is recognized. The concept posits itself to the same extent that it is created. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 11)

For Deleuze and Guattari (1994) the specificity of philosophy is to create concepts which is an activity that brings about novelty and singularity. The creation of concepts does not rely on Universals. "The first principle of philosophy is that Universals explain nothing but must themselves be explained" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 7). In that way, the role of creating concepts is to bring about new possibilities and new worlds, to shift how things are currently articulated and produced. "On their account, the purpose of the philosophical creation of concepts is essentially pragmatic. The aim is not merely to recognize or reconstruct how things are but to transform existing forms of thought and practice" (Patton, 2006, p. 285). *Conceptualising for becoming differently*. It is clear the revolutionary emphasis of the authors. If what we are doing is trying to reflect about something using the same understandings, then we are not doing philosophy, we are not creating concepts.

Philosophy does not contemplate, reflect, or communicate, although it must create concepts for these actions or passions. Contemplation, reflection and communication are not disciplines but machines for constituting Universals in every discipline. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 6)

St. Pierre (2019) takes the philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari to think her postqualitative inquiry. She highlights their ontology of immanence where the Deleuzian notions of the virtual and the actual replace Plato's

transcendentalism which posits two worlds where what exists is a copy – unavoidable imperfect – of the ideal. According to Deleuze (1988) the virtual *is real* and it is what enables the genesis of actual experience. The author does not think that these are two realms that resemble each other; instead, the virtual is different from the actual. The virtual is multiplicity and it is arranged in particular and singular ways to actualise something. There is not a copy of an ideal state, but a virtual configuration that produces. “The object, the actual, can exist only because of singular virtual conditions that cannot be reproduced.” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 5)

It is in this immanent world that concepts are created not as representations of a given state of affairs – that would be back to posit a transcendence – but as becomings in themselves that *do* something in the world.

There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world) and a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather, an assemblage establishes connections between certain multiplicities drawn from each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel nor the world as its object nor one or several authors as its subject. In short, we think that one cannot write sufficiently in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity. The book as assemblage with the outside, against the book as image of the world. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 23)

In this state of affairs, to produce concepts to represent better or to give voice is not tenable any longer. Producing concepts gets transformed into a kind of revolutionary act for its potentiality to bring about new realities.

In Deleuze’s (2004) conceptualisation, we are not thinking when we are just recognising. He develops that through recognition difference is subordinated to identity so that there are already certain unities that are different from each other – in contrast, a positive and affirmative difference is positing how things get made, always anew, through productive differences. Deleuze differentiates the *dogmatic image of thought* which is given through recognition and forecloses the possibility of novelty from *thinking*. Thinking is through an encounter with something that we cannot recognise, that we cannot make *easy sense* (Mazzei, 2014) of.



Something in the world forces us to think. This something is an object not of recognition but of a fundamental encounter. What is encountered may be Socrates, a temple or a demon. It may be grasped in a range of affective tones: wonder, love, hatred, suffering. In whichever tone, its primary characteristic is that it can only be sensed. In this sense it is opposed to recognition. In recognition, the sensible is not at all that which can only be sensed, but that which bears directly upon the senses in an object which can be recalled, imagined or conceived. (Deleuze, 2004, p. 176)

It is along these lines that Jackson (2017) puts forward her *thinking without a method*. A method would set up from the beginning categories that we would expect to recognise. In analysing an interview, a methodology teaches us to look to recognise themes. In that endeavour, what we do is to recognise but not to think – in Deleuzian terms.

Undertaking a research project without a set methodology does not secure in any way that I will be *thinking* with concepts. I could make a research that also looks to recognise and to categorise. For example, to examine the literature to see how the concepts that interest me have been conceptualised in different traditions. This would limit the possibilities to actually encounter something that I cannot make sense of, something that would bring me to a new place, make me create a new way of articulating and producing differently. *Conceptualising for becoming differently*.

### **What I have been doing**

St. Pierre says: “To repeat, one begins post qualitative inquiry without a methodology” (St. Pierre, 2019, p. 10). To have authors stressing this way of researching makes me feel a sense of belonging. Reading about post-qualitative research and other related notions made my own way of researching more clearly intelligible and so now I can explain/justify better to my colleagues what I have been actually doing.

What I have been doing is working with concepts, working with theory to see where they take me, what they enable me to think/feel/do – how they produce a world, how they produce myself. *Conceptualising for becoming differently*. “But a post qualitative inquirer might find a philosophical concept useful, as I

did, in reorienting thought toward the continuous variation in living that might engender thinking in thought, experimentation, and creation.” (St. Pierre, 2019, pp. 8-9)

My concepts of interest: reflexivity and experience get reconceptualised through other concepts/theories. These reconceptualisations make me able to open different ways of thinking and so of articulating the world.

Jackson and Mazzei (2012b) use their thinking with theory. They think with concepts to see where this can diffractively (Barad, 2007) take them. In this movement, they intend to bring about the new, to enable the possibility of thinking/feeling/acting differently. “We are advocating such as a move to create a way of thinking methodologically and philosophically that gets us out of the trap of fixing meaning and instead opens up previously unthought questions.” (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012a, p. 745)

Lenz Taguchi (2016) elaborates her version of *concept as method* based on Colebrook (2013). The concept can be a method because its meaning it is not taken for granted but opened up to be further questioned and thus to produce differently.

This can be envisioned as the pedagogical process of learning from and with the concept, by tracing its conditions of creation in ways that can transform those conditions, and make it possible for us to create new concepts and subsequent material-semiotic differing realities. (Lenz Taguchi, 2016, p. 214)

This is an inquiry into the question about making sense through the concepts of reflexivity and experience. I use the theories to think with them, living my life through their concepts as they take hold of me, seeing where they take me. This involvement of myself asks me at times to bring my experiences to the page. This is not a merely intellectual exercise. It is not just a detached curiosity about how we make sense but a questioning that takes me.

Instead of beginning with questions, which, according to Whitehead, prompt answers that foreclose thought, researchers might begin with those things that present problems in the sense that they take hold and

would not let go, that which Barthes (1980/2010) described as acting with a force that wounds. (Mazzei, 2016, p. 159)

I start researching with a topic that takes hold of me. Making sense of myself. This is an interest that comes from the nights in my childhood where I was silently repeating my name and losing touch with who I was. Karen, Karen, Karen, who is Karen, anyway? It comes from my puzzlement at my own feelings and thoughts, it comes from feeling a stranger to myself and to struggle to give a stable narrative of what is happening to me.

The concepts enter in my life through my way of relating to them and they get transformed as they become with me and I get transformed through them. My ways of relating invite the concepts in certain ways and they shift these ways of relating as well. My ways of relating are intra-active (Barad, 2007) because they do not suppose a self and an environment but continuously produce these differentiations through relating. I become differently and my research becomes differently. My ways of relating to the concepts are not masterfully intentional. My ways of relating are socially, relationally and materially enabled.

As I develop my reconceptualisations, I am also thinking about my ways of relating to theory. In this I make meta-reflexive movements: I (re)turn to what I am doing and I interrogate it, I look at it differently. I think that it is in this differing where something opens, something emerges.

In the process of my research things are always in movement and the crystallizations that make me stand in a securer ground are tentative and temporal. To have a relational onto-epistemology, where everything is constantly in process to be formed can make me feel dizzy. I was looking for a long time at a star through my window; it came as a renewed surprise how the star slowly moved until it went out of my sight. The sky is moving. But no, it is not precisely the sky that is moving – although that might feel more comfortable – the Earth and everything is moving. Right now, everything is moving. Dizziness. Where is my ground?

### ***Becoming new ground – again and again***

We can think about Deleuze and Guattari as holding a particular ethics. “This ethics might be characterized in the language of one or other of the plateaus as an ethics of becoming, of flows or lines of flight, or as an ethics and a politics of deterritorialization.” (Patton, 2006, p. 288)

Deterritorialisation is an important concept in Deleuze and Guattari. Every kind of unit that we can think about: a concept, a body, a person, a country needs to have been territorialised to be what it is; deterritorialisation is the possibility of this unit to become differently through a line of flight. “The very connective forces that allow any form of life to become what it is (territorialise) can also allow it to become what it is not (deterritorialise)” (Colebrook, 2002, p. xxii). The concepts that I am looking at: reflexivity and experience, might be territorialised by humanistic and phenomenological philosophy and they might become otherwise through being deterritorialised and in that movement, become differently.

But Deleuze and Guattari are not proclaiming the need to break apart every order that exists, the picture is much more complex. It is not that deterritorialisation is good and territorialisation is bad. Furthermore, in the movements of deterritorialisation through lines of flight, the lost territory can be reterritorialised even in a more rigid way by other forces. For example, the concept of reflexivity might have been reterritorialised by posthumanism in a way that it leaves it still more fixed and motionless.

That is why one can never posit a dualism or a dichotomy, even in the rudimentary form of the good and the bad. You may make a rupture, draw a line of flight, yet there is still a danger that you will reencounter organizations that restratify everything, formations that restore power to a signifier, attributions that reconstitute a subject—anything you like, from Oedipal resurgences to fascist concretions. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 10)

What Deleuze and Guattari advice is something quite more tempered than to follow lines of flights and break apart every *strata*<sup>20</sup>. Moreover, they warn about the dangers that can entail that extreme position. In the chapter called: *How do you make yourself a body without organs (BwO)?*<sup>21</sup>, they convey:

Staying stratified—organized, signified, subjected—is not the worst that can happen; the worst that can happen is if you throw the strata into demented or suicidal collapse, which brings them back down on us heavier than ever. This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous place on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensities segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight, causing conjugated flows to pass and escape and bringing forth continuous intensities for a BwO. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 161)

This ethic resonates with me. I am looking to open up the concepts that I am exploring but through doing that, I also stay with some theories as my ground and I produce new grounds where I can feel comfortable for a while. I feel alive connecting to something wider that I do not manage, as part of a process that takes me to become what I do not expect. Nonetheless, at the same time, I am very aware of my need for ground and certainties. Inspired by Winnicott (1964, 1971) I think of the need for ground and recognition as necessary to become alive and active. So, one of the dangers is staying too static, the other is jumping into a dissolution that does not allow me to keep playing. In the next section, I sketch how I use the authors – how I relate to them – in a way that is coherent with the ethics that I have just mentioned.

---

<sup>20</sup> Strata refers to what has been thickened by “accumulations, coagulations, sedimentations, foldings.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 502)

<sup>21</sup> This concept, BwO (Body without organs), refers to the possibility of connections, productions, deterritorialisations and becomings, where there is not stratum or an organism as a centre of stability.

### ***Using the authors***

In this work, I will be using theories that criticise each other and furthermore theories that are built in the ruins of others. I find interesting how Jackson and Mazzei (2012b) work with diverse authors and concepts, not needing to fit them together, but working diffractively (Barad 2007) with them – seeing where they can take them.

In working diffractively, the concept is not measured in its correctness or its truth-value – we are not using the concepts within a representationalistic frame. Instead, the concepts are valued in what they produce, in what questions they open, in what new thoughts and experiences they allow.

#### *Conceptualising for becoming differently.*

Vagle (2015) works with different traditions not aiming at an overarching approach that contains or overcomes the others. “However, I think productive theoretical work can take place when we do not aim to reconcile—but to work the edges and margins to see what might become.” (Vagle, 2015, p. 597). This does not refer to a dialogue between theories. Instead, with Deleuze and Guattari it is about connecting in the middle and becoming otherwise. “It is in this playfulness (as opposed to dialogue) where weeds (and flower and stalk) grow.” (Vagle & Hofsess, 2016, p. 335)

I use the theories. I take the criticisms that they have done – and received – and this does not prevent me from seeing the potential usefulness and productivity of highly challenged theories. I do this because having a relational ontology, I cannot have the rhetoric of bringing the new and over with the old as if they were consummated and separated entities. Furthermore, using Barad’s (2007) concepts, from a relational intra-active ontoepistemology, I assert that there is not a theory that is categorically better or truer than the others but that each of them works like an *apparatus* that enacts the *agential*

*cuts* – that is the boundary-making practices – that bring about different worlds.<sup>22</sup>

Barad (2007) takes Bohr's conceptualisation of apparatus as the material arrangements through which different realities and concepts are formed. For example, we cannot think about the concept of speed apart from a determinate apparatus that measures/produces it. Taking further this conceptualisation of apparatuses, we could think about the theories and the concepts as apparatuses that make the agential-cuts of what emerges as elements. The production of boundaries through an apparatus is what Barad calls agential cuts. These agential cuts are what produce the reality and the meaningfulness of what appears.

Therefore, for example, I think that phenomenology with its emphasis in pre-reflective experience works like an apparatus that produces, say, a notion of experience as foundational, a subject that can reflect about their pre-reflective experience, a method to try to access experience directly, etc. These productions create a world and create meaning in a way that can be useful for some things and less useful for others. Probably if I am with a client who has experienced a traumatic event, the concept of pre-reflective experience will appear for me and I will make use of it to make sense of their pain and to try to help them to articulate it.

I sustain a relational, immanent and productive perspective and this leads me to regard every theory and concept in its productions – not in establishing from an impossible neutral place which one is better and truer than the other.

Murris and Bozalek (2019) bring to the foreground how we, as authors, relate to the theories – what we do with them. They write their paper about the use of both Deleuze and Barad responding to Hein (2016) that, as I mentioned earlier, argues that both theories are incommensurable.

---

<sup>22</sup> I delve in this discussion in chapter four: *Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce*.

Hein (2016) uses the notion of critique comparing one philosophical position with another and finding the one wanting (in his case: Barad versus Deleuze, where Barad is seen as falling short of a philosophy of immanence and difference), thus seeing them in opposition to each other. Instead, and in line with the relational ontology of Barad and Deleuze, we use a diffractive methodology as a way of responding response-ably to Hein by putting the two philosophers in conversation with one another, without presuming that as researchers we are able to map the differences and similarities 'between' their oeuvres objectively – a 'view from nowhere'. (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, p. 873)

Furthermore, I think that embracing and defending a theory as better than the other can enable practices of indoctrination for example in teaching or in supervising because it might be difficult for the students to find other ways of relating apart from complying or refusing.

A common practice in academia is to use the theories looking to find what is wrong with them and to affirm our posture through the criticism of other theories that are deemed inferior, dangerous or untenable. This is what Sedgwick (2003) calls paranoid reading. This might produce a theoretical articulation that closes off on itself affirming its own truth – not inviting to be re-thought. Building on Haraway:

Articulation must remain open, its densities accessible to action and intervention. When the system of connections closes in on itself, when symbolic action becomes perfect, the world is frozen in a dance of death. The cosmos is finished, and it is One. Paranoia is the only possible posture; generous suspicion is foreclosed. (Haraway, 1992, p. 327)

Sedgwick (2003) proposes an alternative way to relate to the theories. Drawing on Klein, she speaks about reparative reading – instead of paranoid reading. She argues that currently the paranoid 'critical' reading is not only an option among others but it is more imperative and dominant. She challenges this way of thinking and tries to open up our practices.

I am saying that the main reasons for questioning paranoid practices are other than the possibility that their suspicions can be delusional or simply wrong. Concomitantly, some of the main reasons for practicing paranoid strategies may be other than the possibility that they offer unique access to true knowledge. They represent a way, among other



ways, of seeking, finding, and organizing knowledge. Paranoia knows some things well and others poorly. (Sedgwick, 2003, p. 130)

My attempt here is to seize the different theories in what I can do with them, where they take me, what possibilities they open to me. I wish to take the concepts and ideas that I read and make something out of them in their intra-action (Barad 2007) with my thinking. *Conceptualising for becoming differently*. To use these ideas. I try to relate to the theories with an emphasis in what of them goes beyond me, in their potentiality to show me/produce and keep on showing me/producing new things.

### ***The Winnicottian use***

Drawing on psychoanalysis, I want to stress how theories and concepts are not mastered by me; they have their otherness which is what makes me able to use them in the Winnicottian (Winnicott, 1971) sense – which is the opposite to the normal notion of use as an utilitarian way of relating. The Winnicottian sense of use refers to what feels external to the self – not controlled by the self – so that it can be useful to the self in that it gives something new or fresh, something that the self could not imagine on its own.

This possibility of object usage is enabled when, after the subject has attacked the object, the object survives – that is, it does not retaliate or withdraw. Given this experience, the subject starts feeling that the object is outside their omnipotent control and therefore is properly another. With this experience, the sense of reality and a new sensation of realness appears (Winnicott, 1971).

I feel that the theories survive me when, after I have criticised them or thought that I can completely grasp them, they surprise me with something new. I think of researchers/authors as surviving when we are willing to welcome criticism without retaliating or evading it – which might have a lot to do with how the social milieu enables a secure space to change our minds, to think further, to doubt ourselves and not losing value and recognition because of that.

There is a yielding here through relating to new concepts or criticisms in letting them show me something else. It is a yielding – not a mastering – because I

do not relate to them from knowing who I am and I what I need from them. Instead, I am taken by them, constantly reshaped with them. I surrender to them. As Ghent (1990) clarifies, surrender is different from submission because in the latter I submit to someone or to something, losing a sense of agency; instead, I surrender to something that no one controls, I let go to be transformed by it, and this brings richness and transformation to my experience.

I relate to the concepts as something that I can make use of; for doing this I need to see them beyond the dichotomic options of just following them in a rigid way or to reject them as worthless. For being able to use the concepts I think that they need to appear as not totally manageable and known by me and thus able to give me something that I did not already have.

I think of this attitude as a yielding or surrendering. Eigen (1981) conceives that there is a vital component in psychic maturation that is only developed through faith. The notion of faith that the author portrays is akin to notions of surrendering or yielding. There is no attempt to control but a letting go to something other. As Ghent (1990) posits, it is important to make clear that surrendering is not meant as submitting to another or to something but as letting go to something that is beyond our control. Yielding and surrendering imply a being vulnerable to the transformations that difference can bring.

For transformation to take place is necessary to be given to what can transform us. As Bollas (1979, 1987) develops with his notion of the *transformational object*, the self enters in a state of faith – and even awe – in the presence of this object, that can only be felt but not known, transforming our environment and self-experience.

With this, I want to make the meaning of yielding more precise. It is not about submission but about a faithful openness and surrendering to what goes beyond my grasp. What I want to say is that a relationship with the concepts that yields to them can be transforming because it is in contact with unfamiliar nourishment. Through risking themselves to unfamiliar territories, the subject

can use otherness for growth (Eigen, 1981). *Conceptualising for becoming differently.*

Concepts and theories can also be taken as dogmas – closed systems that will not allow any difference and will see any attempt of difference as an attack that must be stopped. In these cases of dogmatism, control and mastery are paramount; there is not a space for yielding and surrendering – these are probably dreaded.

The processes of surrendering to something other that we cannot control opens up the possibility of contact with otherness and moving out of our bubble or closed circuit. There is a sensation of freshness and aliveness in meeting otherness. The point that I want to stress is that for encountering the freshness and aliveness of the other we need to be in an attitude of losing the attempts at controlling. Instead, we need to yield, to surrender. This might give us a clue for why there is what we could call as longing for surrender (Ghent, 1990). In giving up a sense of control and mastery, it appears the possibility of something beyond ourselves and with that the sensation of creativity, aliveness and meeting with otherness outside our closed circuit.

As Eigen (1981) expresses what we gain from this faithful attitude is transformation: “His reward is not the certainty of being right or wrong at any given moment, but the profound change of quality and reorientation he finds himself undergoing as an experiencing subject” (1981, p. 429). This thesis has been a yielding to be transformed in ways that I could not expect and this has entailed to risk ontological insecurity.

### ***Risking ontological insecurity***

To be able to think in the Deleuzian manner, we need to be willing to be affected. “In other words, thought happens under the conditions of thinking without method, which remain open to forces of the outside” (Jackson, 2017, p. 669). Jackson (2017) is drawing on Deleuze’s (2006) conceptualisation of *outside*, that does not refer to the usual duality of inside/outside but to the outside as the social terrain of power that folds in to create an inside –

subjectivities – that are the inside of the outside in a process of continuous folding. The outside here is what is ‘outside’ a subjectivity but always producing this subjectivity. Thus, this subjectivity is always liable to be transformed by the outside. This entails an approach to research where the ‘self’ lends itself to be taken and transformed.

In summary, encounters force thought. To create (or to think) requires our openness to the violence of the encounter so that everything is transformed, so that the images we rely on to “make sense” are destroyed to make way for the new. Including ourselves. (Jackson, 2017, p. 670)

As I articulate this, my methodology of *conceptualising for becoming differently* takes potentially intimidating tones. *Warning, through conceptualising you might become otherwise than you were expecting.*

This type of work asks us to tolerate feeling lost and feeling uncertain. It demands to lose our frames of reference. “That I didn’t know how to think—that I sensed my own thinking becoming a stranger to itself—signaled the involuntary emergence of thinking without method” (Jackson, 2017, p. 672). Because of the required involvement of the self in this work – where the very notion of self is put into question as we become otherwise through our inquiry – the risk of losing ontological security is high. We touch the limits of intelligibility (Butler, 2004) to be able to think differently, to think anew and that involves the possibility of not recognising ourselves.

This kind of inquiry might also inhabit the limits of intelligibility of a discipline (St. Pierre, 2019). In the attempt to bring about the new – and not to represent and recognise – the boundaries of the discipline are stretched out. I think that it is because I am situated within the social sciences is that I encounter the problem of needing a methodology and thus of needing to justify why I am not using a set methodology. This need would not be present in philosophy. Maybe this work of thinking again about methodology is about social sciences pushing its edges and becoming otherwise, following up a *line of flight* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) – that is, a movement

that allows something to become differently. This movement risks unintelligibility: Is this research? It does not look like it. While almost all of my fellow students were collecting data, transcribing interviews and doing analysis, I was reading and writing, reading and writing. Was I doing research? Proper research?

## **Conclusions**

My research has a relational, productive and immanent onto-epistemology. This means that all of what exists is in a constant process of becoming through relations. This entails that the boundaries that define one entity from another are not drawn in any fundamental or essential way. Instead, with Barad (2007), the boundaries are produced through material-discursive practices that work as apparatuses that enact the agential cuts of what will be considered the entities of a world. My onto-epistemology is immanent because all of this relating and producing is happening at the same level. There is not, on the one hand, a world of concepts or representations and on the other a world of things needing representing. Instead, with Barad (2007), the concepts produce reality and matter and the concepts come from material-discursive arrangements.

I put forward that the concepts can act as apparatuses that produce the boundaries that define a particular form of world. For instance, reflexivity understood from a representationalistic understanding can act as an apparatus that produces a world divided between things and representations of these things. Because my perspective highlights how the world is produced rather than represented, it makes sense to me to think about the different theories in terms of what they produce, that is, in terms of what they enable.

This does not mean that I think that every theory is equally true so that I believe in representationalism as much as I believe in posthumanism. To the contrary, I am grounded in this onto-epistemological position that makes me regard every theory in its productions rather than in its truth-value; precisely because I have a relational, productive and immanent onto-epistemology where everything is in the process of being produced. I am aware that I say that I take

the theories in what they produce rather than in its truth-value but that, paradoxically, I take this relational, productive and immanent perspective as truer – precisely as ‘representing’ how the world works<sup>23</sup>.

My research is conceptual and I use the concepts and theories to open up different worlds so different ways of living and experiencing. My inquiry is about opening up different ways of articulating how we make sense of ourselves. I do this through reconceptualising reflexivity and experience

My way is to diffract these concepts through different theories so that they can become otherwise and so that a new conceptualisation can emerge from this process. Crucially, the new concept or way of understanding also produces a different world and so produces me differently. This entails that as a researcher I am not a bounded subjectivity but I am becoming with my work, through intra-acting (with) it. *Conceptualising for becoming differently*.

Because of this constant process of shaping and reshaping this kind of research risks ontological insecurity – through becoming otherwise, I need to lose how I have been used to know and to produce myself. With the ethics that I read through Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I do not glorify the processes of transformation and becoming otherwise because that might be a way of relating that produces either a collapse or a fortified rigid structure. Instead, I try to go about my research in a process of becoming a renewed ground – again and again.

I use the concepts to see where they can take me, to diffract and be diffracted through them. I am wary of trying not to go into a paranoid reading (Sedgwick, 2003) that collapses one theory to fortify another one. Instead, I am thinking about what I can make, what I can produce with the different theories.

In this endeavour, it makes sense to me to relate to the different theories and authors through using them in the Winnicottian sense (Winnicott, 1971). This

---

<sup>23</sup> In chapter six: *Betraying our best intentions: using meta-reflexivity with diffraction?* I develop how these paradoxes are not avoidable.

kind of use refers to relate to them as something that I cannot completely manage so something external from me that I can use precisely because of its difference. This way of relating is enabled when a theory or an author is *attacked* through criticism, for example, and the theory or the author *survives* the attack not retaliating or evading it but elaborating from it. Giving this response, the theory or the author surprises us with a novelty that is not under our control.

After having developed my methodology, my way of working with the concepts, I am ready to start with the reconceptualisation of reflexivity that I will elaborate in four chapters (chapter three, four, five and six) and then my reconceptualisation of experience in chapter seven. Specifically, the next chapter, chapter three, thinks about the need for foreign fields to reflexively question our assumptions. My thesis not only uses different theories but different disciplines (or fields). In that sense, in a way, this next chapter also speaks about my interdisciplinary methodology to arrive at renewed understandings.

## **Chapter 3: Questioning our assumptions through yielding to foreignness**





## Introduction

In this chapter, I wonder about how to think about the possibility of questioning our assumptions – that is encouraged in the social sciences – without resorting to the notion that we can stand in a neutral place, outside ourselves and our social involvements, to critically assess what we are taking for granted. I develop that a possibility for being reflexive, in the sense of questioning our assumptions, is given through *yielding*<sup>24</sup> to *foreignness*, rather than intentionally and masterfully deciding to question them. After setting my thesis about yielding to foreignness as a way for questioning what we take for granted, I open the question about what might make us prone to risk ourselves to foreignness and what are the transforming possibilities that this might bring.

My circumstances are related to the content of this chapter. My research had started as a psychotherapeutic inquiry that used some philosophical concepts and has moved to a more poststructural and posthuman inquiry. In this movement to different fields, I have come to question, without intending it, what I was taking for granted before. This chapter was the first that I wrote about reflexivity from a social perspective; moving away from my previous focus on subjectivity from psychoanalytic and phenomenological existential perspectives. In a way, this chapter opened the road for me to develop the thesis in its current form; this is why I start with this chapter. I think of my work as interdisciplinary and I believe that this interdisciplinary is, to a great extent, what encourages me to continuously question what I am taking for granted.

Foucault in one of the versions of the preface of the volume 2 of *The History of Sexuality*, narrates how he arrived at this book which made a substantial shift in relation to his previous articulations:

And it led in turn to a rearrangement of my original plan, a considerable delay in publication, and the hazards of studying material I had barely heard of six or seven years ago. But I reflected that, after all, it was best

---

<sup>24</sup> As I developed in the Methodology chapter using psychoanalysis (Bollas, 1987; Eigen, 1981; Ghent, 1990; Winnicott, 1971) yielding is an important concept for me that points at not trying to master and control something other – something foreign – so that we can *use* it and transformed by it.

to sacrifice a definite program to a promising line of approach. I also reminded myself that it would probably not be worth the trouble of making books if they failed to teach the author something he had not known before, if they did not lead to unforeseen places, and if they did not disperse one toward a strange and new relation with himself. The pain and pleasure of the book is to be an experience. (Foucault, 1997, p. 205)

As Foucault makes apparent here, yielding to foreignness, in the sense of strangeness, can produce a new way of relating to oneself – a novel manner of being reflexive about oneself<sup>25</sup>. This shift is what allows us to question our previous assumptions. I am proposing that the possibility of questioning what we are taking for granted is given by risking ourselves to foreign territories.

In this chapter, I wonder about how I can think about the capacity of being reflexive about my assumptions – in the sense of being able to question them – while I think that the subject is not a bounded individuality that can sovereignly exercise reflexivity. I want to question my assumptions – and qualitative research and psychotherapeutic practice ask me to do so – but does that imply that I would need a neutral place ‘outside’ myself to observe and question myself? Furthermore, does this imply that there is a self (myself) as a unit already there that I can be reflexive about? How am I supposed to question my assumptions if I am continuously culturally produced?

To have a poststructuralist understanding and to use reflexivity might be a conflicting practice (Davies et al., 2004). When we are reflexive we are questioning ourselves and our assumptions; this may be understood to take for granted that there is a self already there to be known and questioned from an external and neutral place. Foucault and Butler challenge this notion. We

---

<sup>25</sup> Here I am outlining what I will develop in the next chapter (number four) about my conceptualisation of reflexivity as affective ways of relating that produce. This reflexivity is a continuous activity that does not require to be explicitly articulated; nonetheless, we can bring our attention to it in a meta-reflexive gesture (that is also another way of relating that produces). However, inevitably, throughout the thesis – and more so before chapter four where I directly reconceptualise reflexivity – I use the word reflexivity as it is dominantly understood, that is, as a cognitive and intentional activity, and also as each author that I work with defines it. When I am using my conceptualisation of reflexivity, I signal that I am referring to it, that is, as reflexivity as affective ways of relating that produce, or it can be understood contextually.

learn from them that social discourses are continuously productive of subjectivities and we cannot stand outside of them to question our assumptions; whenever we are reflexive we do so traversed by social discourses. (Butler, 2004, 2005; Foucault, 1990)

Many authors from the social sciences (T. Adams & Holman Jones, 2011; Davies et al., 2004; Denzin, 1997; Gemignani, 2017; Lather, 1993; Pillow, 2003, 2015) address this dilemma explicitly in different ways. They use reflexivity while also acknowledging its limits, they think about the subject as already social. In this paper, I hope to contribute to this thread through grappling with the question: How can we question our assumptions when we cannot stand outside social discourses because we are traversed by them? Bringing Bourdieu to the conversation, I offer the thesis that reflexivity, as questioning our assumptions, emerges through yielding to the foreignness of unfamiliar social fields or positionings.

With Foucault and Butler, I understand that our assumptions are produced by our adherence to certain social discourses that breathe through us. Because we are social through and through we cannot question our assumptions from an asocial space. On the contrary, inspired by Bourdieu<sup>26</sup>, reflexivity has a chance to emerge when we go out of our familiar social fields through concretely moving between the borders of foreign fields or positions. I offer this as a way of understanding a reflexive practice – questioning one's assumptions – whilst holding a poststructuralist notion of subjectivity.

---

<sup>26</sup> Bourdieu contributions also build in structuralism, proposing an alternative to go beyond it, but it is not considered poststructuralism in the same way as Foucault is (Harcourt, 2007). Bourdieu theorises two moments. The first is related with objectivism and structuralism, in which the subject is taken out of the picture. In this analysis, a *field* is sketched through positions stated by the amount of total capital and of specific capitals (economic, cultural, social and symbolic). The particular point of view of any agent in the field will be shaped by his position. The second moment is related to this position that is expressed in a *habitus*, that is a corporeal way of embracing practices and ways of perceiving the world. This *habitus* is made in the roots of the position in the *field* and is also constructing, reproducing or changing the same *field*. This way of being –*habitus*– is not conscious, that is why in a solely subjective phenomenal account you cannot explain these conditions that make this very account possible (Bourdieu, 1989; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).

Reflexivity as the questioning of our assumptions has the chance to emerge when we yield to foreignness.

In what follows, I sketch the call to being reflexive about our assumptions in the social sciences. I trouble the possibility of responding to this call drawing on Foucault and Butler, who insist that the ways in which we are reflexive about ourselves and our work are constrained by the social discourses available. Taking this understanding of reflexivity, I set out to explore the possibilities of reflexively questioning our assumptions. Bourdieu's contribution provides us with the notion that reflexivity emerges through the crisis produced by the mismatch between the subject's *habitus* and a new *field* or position within a field. On the other hand, Foucault offers the possibility of thinking otherwise through becoming aware that our constitution is contingent and proposing to intentionally test our limits. Appreciating Foucault's motor to become differently, I stay with the Bourdieusian need for stumbling against different fields, finding ourselves in a dissonance that brings our previously held assumptions to the fore, rather than purposefully trying out new practices to push the boundaries of our constitution. Butler (2004) underscores that because social discourses produce us as subjects, they give us an ontological ground that gets shaken in the exploration of foreign terrains. In that sense, yielding to foreignness might be a risky practice and it is worth asking what circumstances may make it a desirable practice. I underscore Butler's emphasis on the *necessity* to open alternatives and question our assumptions – rather than the desire to do so – because our current situation asks for it. I conclude by developing the need to yield to foreignness through stumbling against what we do not expect to be able to challenge our assumptions and be potentially transformed.

### **How can we respond to the call of being reflexive about our assumptions?**

In the social sciences, the call to be reflexive in the sense of questioning our assumptions is well known (Bondi, 2009; Davies et al., 2004; Denzin, 1997;

Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Etherington, 2017; Finlay, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2017; Gemignani, 2017; Pillow, 2003, 2015; G. Rose, 1997; Shaw, 2016; Wilkinson, 1988). For instance, Finlay, a psychotherapist with a keen interest in reflexivity, posits in a recent special issue around reflexivity:

With reflexivity, researchers examine and deconstruct the way their research knowledge is created. They evaluate how they might be contingently implicated in their research by examining how their background, assumptions, positioning, behaviour, and subjectivity might impact on the research process and vice versa. (Finlay, 2017, p. 120)

She underscores how the researcher needs to be critically aware of themselves to see, for example, how their assumptions close down and open up possibilities of understanding (Finlay, 2008, p. 17). Wilkinson, a feminist researcher, in a widely quoted paper says: “Reflexive analysis here entails continuous, critical examination of the practice/process of research to reveal its assumptions, values, and biases” (Wilkinson, 1988, p. 495). In a recent handbook of qualitative research Denzin and Lincoln say:

Reflexivity – as well as the poststructural and postmodern sensibilities concerning quality in qualitative research – demands that we interrogate each of our selves regarding the ways in which research efforts are shaped and staged around the binaries, contradictions, and paradoxes that form our own lives. (2017, p. 143)

With the examples above I hope to have illustrated how we as social scientists are called, in different ways, to be reflexive about our assumptions. At this juncture, I would like to introduce a Foucauldian argument to trouble the possibility to straightforwardly responding to this call.

For instance, Denzin and Lincoln (2017) suggest a particular way of reflexivity that invites us to interrogate ourselves (in plural), being aware of our multiplicity, contradictions and of how the selves are continuously created in the research process itself. I do not think that this is an idea that came just out of the mind of its authors. In contrast, I think that the influence of poststructuralism and postmodernism in our field is allowing us a particular way of being reflexive about ourselves, a way in which we permit – and maybe

even welcome – our discontinuities, contradictions and ambiguities. This is what I learn from the late Foucault (1984, 1990, 1997): the way in which we look at ourselves – and through this, the way in which we *produce* ourselves – is not apart from the discourses that we have available. We can think that because it is currently culturally intelligible – and valued – to posit a multiple, contradictory and ambiguous sense of self, researchers might be more prone to be reflexive about themselves in that way. Therefore, we are reflexive about ourselves in a more complex way – allowing multiplicity, contradiction and ambiguity – but we do so being also spoken through a cultural discourse influential in the social sciences that gives the possibility and the incentive to do so. So, we are reflexive about our assumptions, we might be critical of them, but we do so being somewhat obedient to another set of assumptions of what is available and validated in our discipline.

Conceiving reflexivity as socially produced, the call to being reflexive about our assumptions in the social sciences is troubled. How are we going to be critically aware of what we take-for-granted if we cannot stand outside the social? Even in troubling ourselves and questioning our assumptions we are being spoken by, say, poststructuralism, that operates as a social discourse that encourages us to look at ourselves in particular ways. So how can we be reflexive about our assumptions if we cannot stand outside discourse? In the next section, I develop further this argument about how the way in which we are reflexive is socially instituted.

### **We are never reflexive alone**

According to Butler (2005) the ‘I’ arrives belatedly when we are already subject to a social order that gives the available possibilities of what would be an intelligible subjectivity. Butler contends:

When the “I” seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find that this self is already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration; indeed, when the “I” seeks to give an account of itself, an account that must include the conditions of

its own emergence, it must, as a matter of necessity, become a social theorist. (2005, p. 8)

Furthermore, according to Butler (2005), the way in which we are relating to ourselves is enabled by the discourses that constitute the possibilities of *intelligibility* – that is, the recognisable ways of being a subject. She is emphatic in saying, informed by psychoanalysis, that we are always partially opaque to ourselves. We are always reflexive about ourselves in a social context that is forming ourselves in ways that we cannot fully understand.

I remember how reading this book by Butler affected my ways of being aware of myself. I was immersed in the reading when a colleague and friend called me and as usual asked me: “how are you?” In other occasions, this question would have led me into an extended and nuanced ‘description’ of how I have been feeling, what I have been thinking and so forth. At that moment, though, nothing could come to my mind. What could I say, anyway? How was I going to make sense of myself at that moment? On what narratives was I going to draw? How was my account related to the asking? I believe that this book got into me, that I yielded to its foreignness – I welcomed it in – and this movement brought a sense of misfit and disorientation to a practice of making sense of myself that I was used to. Later on, I could critically elaborate on the assumptions that I was holding whilst able to just answer the question: “how are you?”

Foucault’s theory has a long-standing commitment to understanding how the social discourses are inscribed in the sense of self – a theorisation to which he arrived in his later works. He explains his aim saying that:

Finally, I have sought to study - it is my current work - the way a human being turns himself into a subject. For example, I have chosen the domain of sexuality-how men have learned to recognize themselves as subjects of "sexuality." (Foucault, 1982, p. 778)

Bringing this to the practice of reflexivity in the social sciences, the ways in which I am aware of myself as a researcher are not apart from the discursive practices that structure the field of social sciences.



Discursive practices are characterized by the demarcation of a field of objects, by the definition of a legitimate perspective for a subject of knowledge, by the setting of norms for elaborating concepts and theories. Hence, each of them presupposes a play of prescriptions that govern exclusions and selections. (Foucault, 1997, p. 11)

It is important to say that for Foucault (1997) there is no one to one correspondence between certain discursive practices and certain disciplines. For instance, my way of writing this text including my 'experiences' is enabled because in my field, in the place that I work, in the journals that I read and the conferences that I go to, this practice is recognised. All these encourage us to be reflexive about ourselves by drawing from our 'experiences'. But this is not as straightforward; in the same field, there are also competing discourses that are more critical on the notion and the use of 'experience' (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, 2012a, 2017) – this is why I add the quote marks. In this sense, there is not a stable categorisation of what is conceivable and valuable but an ongoing dynamic where power/knowledge is involved in the struggle to validate claims. According to Foucault:

To be more precise, we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that can come into play in various strategies. (Foucault, 1978, p. 100)

To conclude, for Foucault and Butler, we are never reflexive in isolation. The very ways in which we are reflexive about ourselves are socially given. In this panorama, the call to reflexively questioning our assumptions is complicated because we are always drawing from social discourses in our reflexive activity. The question then is how can we be able to see and trouble what we take for granted? In the next section, I delve more in Bourdieu seeing what his theory can contribute to my argument.

## Reflexivity emerging from mismatches: Bourdieu's perspective

The notion of reflexivity<sup>27</sup> influenced by Bourdieusian theory places it outside the volition of the subject and in the mismatch between habitus and field (M. Adams, 2006; Adkins, 2003; Bondi, 2009; Bottero, 2010; McNay, 1999; Rafieian & Davis, 2016; Yang, 2013). Habitus refers to the embodied knowledge of how to perceive and act that is born from our positioning in a social field that, in turn, is structured according to the amounts of different types of *capital* (economic, cultural and social) that people hold. (Bourdieu, 1984, 1989; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)

Different fields are structured so that there are sectors that hold more capital (economic, cultural, social) and there are struggles to get to positions of greater validation. The value that a piece of work has is related to its positioning "The meaning of a work (artistic, literary, philosophical, etc.) changes automatically with each change in the field within which it is situated for the spectator or reader." (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 30-31)

When I am using Butler and Foucault which sector of the field am I addressing? What does it say about me as an author that I work with them? How I feel about myself when using them changes according to the different fields and my position in them; when I am teaching I might feel knowledgeable and critical, when I am at a conference filled with people working with *new materialisms* (Coole & Frost, 2010), I might feel old fashioned. My work is valued and

---

<sup>27</sup> It is important to underline that this is a notion of reflexivity inspired by Bourdieu rather than faithful to his own direct conceptualisation of reflexivity and to the whole of his theory. It is in Bourdieu's commentators (M. Adams, 2006; Adkins, 2003; Bondi, 2009; Bottero, 2010; McNay, 1999; Rafieian & Davis, 2016; Yang, 2013) rather than in his own work that the link between reflexivity and the dynamic of the mismatch can be seen. In fact, when Bourdieu speaks directly about reflexivity his notion differs from the definition that I have suggested. He says that his aim is to achieve greater objectivity through reflexivity as exercised by people in the academic field (Bourdieu, 2004; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Bourdieu is keen to say that we cannot step out of our positioning to be reflexive. In that sense, he posits that it needs to become part of the habitus as a reflex, that is, automatic. Importantly, for this to happen it needs to be a collective enterprise; being part of the habitus it needs to be promoted from the field. (Bourdieu, 2004)

perceived very differently in relation to the field and the position within it that I am holding.

For Bourdieu, what is more pervasive is a pre-reflective (that is, embodied and not cognitively thematised) adaptation to our field – precisely because our habitus is created by it. It is only when our habitus does not fit with the field that our unquestioned assumptions are foregrounded. I suggest the expression *like a fish out of the water* conveys this experience. Levenson quotes McLuhan saying “We don’t know who discovered water, but we do know it wasn’t a fish” (2001, p. 239). It is unlikely that we are reflexive about how we are and what are we immersed in if we have not inhabited other surroundings.

When, for example, I speak about my ideas with someone who comes from another theoretical perspective, or who belongs to other institutions or traditions, their comments could put my thinking in a different light so that I am able to suddenly see something that I was previously assuming. This might be refreshing; it might also be upsetting.

In that sense, I am saying that a possibility of being reflexive about our assumptions is through yielding to the foreignness that emerges from different fields or positionings. Conceiving that we are socially constituted, including the ways in which we are reflexive about ourselves, the possibility of developing reflexivity is not standing outside the social but *moving between frontiers*. This implies that questioning our assumptions is not an activity that we can do intentionally and at will; instead, explicitly questioning our assumptions, is an *aposteriori* elaboration on a shift that already happened in the mismatch between habitus and field.

Reflexivity emerges from the mismatch between habitus and field because this gives the opportunity to become aware of our habitus. This is more prone to happen in times of crisis (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) because in a crisis the stability of the fields is in jeopardy. It implies a defamiliarisation with our habitual ways of thinking, perceiving and acting; thus, enabling change. “Indeed this kind of reflexivity, constituted in the specific conditions of a lack of

fit between the feel for the game and the game itself, must itself be understood as a transforming practice.” (Adkins, 2003, p. 27)

Bourdieu (1977) refers to this reflexivity – emerging from mismatches – as the *awakening of consciousness*. He differentiates his understanding from Sartre’s use of the phrase. For understanding the awakening of consciousness, the existential philosopher postulates a subject that can stand outside of its social constraints and become conscious of its unsurmountable freedom (Sartre, 2015)<sup>28</sup>. In contrast, Bourdieu proposes that this consciousness can only be reached having the more material foundation of the movement across fields or within them.

The practical questioning of the theses implied in a particular way of living that is brought about by "culture contact" or by the political and economic crises correlative with class division is not the purely intellectual operation which phenomenology designates by the term *epoché*, the deliberate, methodical suspension of naive adherence to the world. The critique which brings the undiscussed into discussion, the unformulated into formulation, has as the condition of its possibility objective crisis, which, in breaking the immediate fit between the subjective structures and the objective structures, destroys self-evidence practically. (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 168-169)

It is very relevant how Bourdieu describes the fields as producing a naturalisation that makes difficult that the members of it are reflexive about it. “Every established order tends to produce (to very different degrees and with very different means) the naturalization of its own arbitrariness” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164). The extreme of this, when things appear as self-evident, is called *doxa*. “This experience we shall call *doxa*, so as to distinguish it from an orthodox or heterodox belief implying awareness and recognition of the possibility of different or antagonistic beliefs.” (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 164)

In this way, orthodox discourse tries to go back to the *doxa*, without succeeding because the horizon of heterodoxy – that is, competing alternatives – is already present. In this sense, Bourdieu differentiates the opposition between right and wrong in the terrain of the opinion from the opposition between what

---

<sup>28</sup> The original year of this publication (in French) is 1943.

can be thought and articulated (be it right or wrong, orthodox or heterodox) and what is taken for granted (doxa). (Bourdieu, 1977, pp. 169-170)

McNay (1999) richly develops this Bourdieusian notion of reflexivity as emerging from mismatches<sup>29</sup>. Adams (2006) specifies that McNay draws in a particular aspect of Bourdieu's theory to think about reflexivity, namely the possibility of transformation and change in the very movement across or within fields. Adkins (2003) contributes that: "Reflexivity is therefore understood by McNay not to be a generalized, universal capacity of subjects but to arise unevenly from subjects' embeddedness within differing sets of power relations." (2003, p. 30)

Inspired by this Bourdieusian perspective, I would put forward that reflexively questioning our assumptions is not an activity of self-observation and self-crafting but of the surprises that can emerge when we yield to be affected by our dwelling in a different field and/or a different position within a known field. Even more, I think that reflexivity is spurred when we inhabit different fields and/or positionings and yield ourselves to be conflicted. In this way, we would nurture reflexivity in spaces of diversity and dissonance. For instance, Pillow (2015) calls attention to the separation between theoretical ascriptions as illustrated by how at conferences "all the white poststructuralists sit at the same table" (p. 431). In contrast, Pillow (2015) proposes a coming together of approaches that are in a potentially productive tension with each other.

According to Bourdieu (1984, 1989, 1990, 1993), the sharing with people in the vicinities of the field assures us a tacit understanding and coordination because of having similar habitus. This does not facilitate a reflexive – in the sense of critically questioning – engagement with ourselves and our

---

<sup>29</sup> Nonetheless, it is important to note that for Bourdieu the possibility of change through the mismatch is not a given. In fact, it can happen what he calls the 'hysteresis of habitus' where the habitus and the new field or positioning continue to be *out of sync* because the subject stays with the previous habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). The hysteresis of habitus can produce an inability to think in a renewed way, stubbornly thinking and perceiving in terms of the past (Bourdieu, 1977). This makes clear that the mismatch can enable transforming possibilities but not in a necessary way.

surroundings. Hence, when we stay in our familiar certainties, not exploring or even disdaining other possibilities, it might be more difficult to be reflexive about our assumptions.

Bourdieu argues that within a field there are assumptions that structure the field and are invisible for the people who are inside. If someone were to articulate a critique about the field that exposes its assumptions, they would need to be outside the field unless the very form of the critique is done in a way that is coherent with the logic of the field (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 73). This makes me think about the critique that I made at the end of the first section on reflexivity in the social sciences. I suggested that when we interrogate ourselves, allowing multiplicity and paradoxes, this critical questioning of ourselves is also obedient to a discourse validated in our field. I posited that this interrogation of ourselves might also entail submissiveness to our field. According to Bourdieu's suggestion, I can do this critique without risking my belonging to the field because in the very critique I am using the logic of the field: I am precisely putting forward a paradox in our possibilities to be critical and through this, I am responding to the call to question myself.

Now, how was I able to arrive at that critique? I believe that my dwelling in different fields – interdisciplinarity – is important. For example, I came into contact with Foucault's and Butler's writings. But, can I differentiate so clearly one field from the others? Foucault (and Butler) can help me with this.

### ***Thinking about social fields as fluctuating with Foucault***

For Foucault (1978, 1997) the disciplines are not clearly delineated and differentiated from one another. For example, it is not that psychotherapy as a discipline has a certain number of ruling discourses, but it is subject to dynamic and ongoing configurations. This helps me to specify that the foreign fields I am referring to do not coincide with different disciplines. It can happen that different disciplines are ruled by the same discursive practices and conversely within one discipline there may be plenty of space for variation and movement so that foreignness is easily encountered within it.

This connects with different conceptualisations of power in Foucault and Bourdieu. Both agree that power works directly on bodies and on ways of thinking without a conscious decision by the subject. However, Foucault holds a thoroughly relational view of power: it is about particular and situated configurations (Foucault, 1978). In contrast, for Bourdieu, power is associated with capital and can be exerted by people situated in a privileged position in the field. (Akram, Emerson & Marsh, 2015; Bourdieu, 1989)

Moreover, for Foucault, power already implies resistance “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (Foucault, 1978, p. 95). I think that this grants Foucault a much more unstable view of society, where resistance might produce shifts on apparently stable discourses. In comparison, Bourdieu’s society is much more stable depending on amounts of capital of which the economic is always the most fundamental. (Yang, 2013)

Likewise, Butler (1997a) stresses her difference from Bourdieu in that he separates the discursive from the social domain giving precedence to the social structures. Whereas Butler insists that they cannot be separated. For Bourdieu, it is a social position that can authorise someone; for Butler is the utterance itself. (Butler, 1997a; Nentwich, Ozbilgin, & Tatli, 2013)

Hence, both Foucault and Butler hold a more dynamic notion of society that I adhere to. Hence, I am taking Bourdieu’s notion for thinking about the possibility of questioning our assumptions in the mismatch of habitus and field; but, with Foucault and Butler, I think of the relationship between habitus and field in a more dynamic manner.

In the next section, I develop the Foucauldian notion of how questioning practices emerge from *straying afield from oneself* (Foucault, 1990) and our usual circuits. Foucault (1990) thinks that we need strangeness to continue thinking anew. In that sense, like Bourdieu, he also portrays a reflexivity arising

through contact with something unfamiliar<sup>30</sup> but this arises in a different way from Bourdieu. I find in Foucault a *motivation* to risk foreignness, a subject *wanting* to do so; whereas Bourdieu does not posit a motivation but situates the possibility of reflexivity in a mismatch that goes well beyond the conscious intentions of the subject.

### **Straying afield from oneself: Foucault's perspective**

It is clear how vital it is according to Foucault to explore different ways of problematising. He declares about his work: "The object was to learn to what extent the effort to think one's own history can free thought from what it silently thinks, and so enable it to think differently." (Foucault, 1990, p. 9)

The self in Foucault is always incomplete – in an ongoing process – and fragile (Fillion, 1998; Longford, 2001). Furthermore, the self is constituted in a historical context. This means that its construction is contingent: it could have been otherwise. Historical analysis sheds light on other possibilities of constitution helping us to have a *perspective* on our current construction. When we have this perspective, the possibility of acting and thinking otherwise is opened. We become de-familiarised with what we take for granted through becoming more familiar with something other (Fillion, 1998). In the same vein, N. Rose (1996) proposes historical investigation as a means to promote our capacity to contest what otherwise would be assumed as natural. "I nonetheless hope that, in rendering the historical contingency of our contemporary relations to ourselves more visible, they may help open these up for interrogation and transformation." (p. 3)

In light of the notion that the self is produced historically and contextually; the possibility is opened to alternative ways to produce ourselves as subjectivities

---

<sup>30</sup> Similarly, Deleuze (2004) conceptualises thought as emerging from an encounter with something that we cannot recognise. I wish to notice this convergence but it would take me away from the particular exercise of this chapter to delve in the Deleuzian conceptualisation. Nonetheless, I touched on it in the chapter on Methodology in the section *Concepts as opening lives* and also in the chapter seven on experience in the section *Experience through posthumanism*.



through appreciating the contingency of our constitution and risking ourselves to different practices from the ones that are supported by the historical systems that have produced us. Precisely, Foucault's (1984, 1986, 1990) *aesthetics of existence* are directed to a project of being de-centred and transformed. Even if as I have explored in the section *We are never reflexive alone*, Foucault sees how we are aware of ourselves as culturally enabled and not as an intentional action by a subject, he also proposes an intentional reflexive process of self-stylization where we disturb what we are used to and risk ourselves to new practices that detach us from how we have been. "I shall thus characterize the philosophical ethos appropriate to the critical ontology of ourselves as a historico-practical test of the limits that we may go beyond, and thus as work carried out by ourselves upon ourselves as free beings" (Foucault, 1984, p. 45). In the Foucauldian understanding, then, we can engage in intentional reflexive practices that transform our subjectivity.

Even if Foucault refers to an intentional reflexive work on ourselves performed by ourselves, with what can be read as an individualistic and bounded tone, the Foucauldian notion of self-creation and transformation has the implicit idea that the self is formed from something other. The self is created in a reflexive exercise (Foucault, 1984); but, I insist, this reflexive exercise, these ways of relating to ourselves are not conscious or intentional and they are socially instituted (Foucault, 1986, 1990). Deleuze (2006) sees in Foucault's later writings, especially in *The use of pleasure* a conceptualisation of the formation of the self through a reflexive *folding* of the social, that inaugurates the distinction of inside and outside (self and society). Deleuze underscores how the outside/inside has not fixed boundaries precisely because the inside is made in a folding the outside. Importantly, if the self is created in a folding movement of the outside (the social) that creates an inside (the self), then the notion of foreignness gets complicated. If the foreign is what is outside, in this conceptualisation the foreign is also inside.

For example, I learn to relate to myself – to be reflexive about myself – as gendered, as a woman. This is not my invention; it is a social discourse that I, unintentionally, fold back to myself, I relate to myself as a woman and through that, I produce myself as a woman. As I understand it, in the aesthetics of existence that Foucault invites, I could become aware that this way of relating to myself is historical and thus, not necessary and, in the light of that, I could intentionally push the boundaries to relate to myself in other ways – e.g. not assuming gender – that produce me differently.

Bourdieu, on the other hand, does not refer to the self-constituting reflexivity as folding that we see in Foucault, for Bourdieu the fields act in our habitus directly. Instead, according to Foucault there is an internal and reflective space that is produced in a folding of the social. Once this internal space is formed we can have a certain independence from social space. (Deleuze 2006)<sup>31</sup>. I think that it is that independence what grants Foucault the possibility of an intentional reflexive practice of self-stylization.

However, this reflexive relation to oneself is never apart from the power-relations that instate it in the first place. “Recuperated by power-relations and relations of knowledge, the relation to oneself is continually re-born, elsewhere and otherwise” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 104). It is important to emphasise that, as Butler (2005) discusses, Foucault’s notion of reflexive practices of self-creation is not made from the position of a centred and sovereign subject. “We find in Foucault an understanding that reflexivity, self-care, and self-mastery are all open-ended and unsatisfiable efforts to ‘return’ to a self from the situation of being foreign to oneself.” (2005, p. 129)

For Foucault, the exercise of thinking and acting otherwise is the motive of his work. I see in Foucault a strong motor to get lost, to become undone, to explore different ways of becoming.

---

<sup>31</sup> According to Bourdieu, there is not such internal reflective space; it is the field that is always constituting the habitus in ways that are embodied and cultural, beyond individual reflection.

It was curiosity - the only kind of curiosity, in any case, that is worth acting upon with a degree of obstinacy: not the curiosity that seeks to assimilate what it is proper for one to know, but that which enables one to get free of oneself. After all, what would be the value of the passion for knowledge if it resulted only in a certain amount of knowledgeable and not, in one way or another and to the extent possible, in the knower's straying afield of himself? There are times in life when the question of knowing if one can think differently than one thinks, and perceive differently than one sees, is absolutely necessary if one is to go on looking and reflecting at all. (Foucault, 1990, p. 8)

Foucault's writing inspires me. I feel that there is indeed something aesthetically appealing about it. It makes me desire to explore and get lost and there is a poetic tonality to it. To me, questioning our assumptions in this way evokes a self that is desiring to do so more than the stumbling that the Bourdieusian misfit between habitus and field brings. Nonetheless, both Foucault and Bourdieu speak about the importance to go out of our usual circuits for being able to question our assumptions. What would be then the particular contribution of Bourdieu? Why do I still need Bourdieu for my argument? In the next section, I explore this question.

### ***Stumbling against foreignness with Bourdieu***

Foucault's use of the expression *straying afield of himself* brings to mind Bourdieu's conceptualisation of fields. Even so, the Bourdieusian and Foucauldian ways of articulating this are different. McNay (1999) is critical towards the Foucauldian notion of self-stylization, considering it overly voluntarist. That is why she turns to Bourdieu: "Habitus suggests a layer of embodied experience that is not immediately amenable to self-fashioning." (1999, p. 102). As I briefly discussed earlier, she draws on Bourdieu to argue that change is produced – in partial and uneven ways – in the concrete struggle of inhabiting different fields. "The questioning of conventional notions of femininity does not arise from exposure to and identification with a greater array of alternative images of femininity but from tensions inherent in the concrete negotiation of increasingly conflictual female roles." (1999, p. 111)

The Bourdieusian emphasis on the need for a concrete movement to different fields and/or positions is the reason why Bourdieu continues to be a necessary contribution to my argument. Taking his conceptualisation further, I think that the fields dwell in the subject in ways that the subject is not conscious of. Inhabiting a foreign field or position affects my perspective in ways that I do not anticipate, like when I stayed wordless faced upon the question “how are you?” I take Bourdieu’s input because it makes me think in the concrete movement and clash that is needed to ignite reflexivity.

Both Bourdieu and Foucault bring to the fore the need for some kind of foreignness to be able to question our assumptions. For Foucault, it is more a process of conceiving other options and engaging in different practices of the self that push the boundaries to produce ourselves differently. In contrast, for Bourdieu the process is not intentional; it is not about having in mind different options but about our bodies – our habitus – coming into contact with unfamiliar fields that produce a mismatch. I highlight the need to stumbling against foreignness (as with Bourdieu) rather than the intentional process of working upon ourselves testing our limits (Foucault, 1984) because I emphasise how we find ourselves with a different perspective due to our dwellings into foreign terrains. I think of a yielding to foreignness and the surprises that can bring, rather than an intentional project of the self of pushing our boundaries. Hence, it is not about *wanting* to yield to foreignness but about *finding* ourselves in a situation where it is asked for us to yield to foreignness. It emerges the question: what situations might enable that we yield to foreignness? If it is not a voluntary and masterful decision, what can make us prone to do it? As Bourdieu notices even in the mismatch of habitus and field there can be a hysteresis of the habitus, where the person holds on to their previous assumptions and manners (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). What situations can be thought as more favourable for us to risk ourselves to transformation through foreignness?

## **The need to yield to foreignness: Butler's emphasis**

Arguably, wanting to yield to foreignness is not an easy movement to sustain. For instance, Laplanche portrays how in Freudian theory there are movements of decentring that are subsequently recentred, "the dominant tendency is always to relativize the discovery and to re-assimilate and reintegrate the alien, so to speak" (1999, 66). In a similar vein, Butler contends that, psychoanalytically, the ego tries to maintain immobility and sameness.

The "mastery" of the ego would then be identified as the effect of the death drive, and life, in a Nietzschean sense, would break apart that mastery, initiating a lived mode of becoming that contests the stasis and defensive status of the ego. (Butler, 1997b, pp. 193-194)

Kristeva (1991) argues that we are foreign to our own selves. Psychoanalytically 'our' unconscious is that very intimate part of ourselves that at the same time is strange and ungraspable. The stranger is within us. She puts forward that assuming this might make us less rejecting of foreignness: "How could one tolerate a foreigner if one did not know one was a stranger to oneself?" (p. 182). Nonetheless, Visker (2005) makes a critique about Kristeva's argument saying that precisely because foreigners have different ways of doing things, they make evident that our ways are not necessary – they could be otherwise – which brings a destabilisation of a sense of security: we could be different, even slightly different, if we are how we are it is not a necessary thing but a product of our living arrangements. They remind us that there is a foreignness that we cannot expel – because it is constituting us. In that way, Kristeva's conclusion is reversed: because we are foreigners to our own selves, foreigners can irritate us. In the academic field, maybe to be in contact with colleagues who concern themselves with something similar to us but in a different way might produce a sense of anxiety because we would need to re-validate – or question – our own ways, ways that we might be emotionally as well as intellectually attached to. Why would we put ourselves in such an uncomfortable situation?

If we are part of a minority or a segregated group, we may feel like a fish out of water. The mismatch between habitus and field would be already there. It would be as if that world is not made for us. That might make us prone to reflexivity, to question our assumptions, and maybe also to question the social assumptions.

Akram and Hogan (2015) have underscored how to have breaches in life could, but not guarantee, being reflexive about taken-for-granted beliefs. They conclude that something needs not to be working for us so that we can risk ourselves to newness. Concordantly to this idea, Bourdieu says:

The dominated classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted; the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of *doxa* or, short of this, of establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, *orthodoxy*. (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 169)

If one is black living in a world that privileges whiteness one could not but think about race. We could think that in these cases reflexivity is forced. This is akin to what Bourdieu calls *the lucidity of the excluded* (Bourdieu, 1990). Thinking in the social sciences, many of the theories that are more critical – questioning dominant assumptions – are associated with unprivileged groups, I am thinking about postcolonialism, feminism, queer theory, etc.

But is this as fixed? We only need to think about how dominated classes also reproduce and desire what enslave them/us. Also, revolutionary movements can come from a political and/or intellectual elite that would not be benefited economically from the revolution.

How are we to think of privilege? Is this something that you *have*? I think that the more dynamic and relational version of power and resistance that Foucault (1978) brings might help here. As I discussed earlier, Foucault sees power as more fragile in that it is always entangled with possibilities of resistance and subversion.

We must make allowance for the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling-block, a point of resistance and a

starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart it. (Foucault, 1978, p. 101)

Is it not the case that previously unprivileged or excluded groups have transformed their situation so that now they are validated and valued (at least in certain circles)? This contributes with a much more mobile and emergent comprehension about privilege and the possibilities of subversion.

Furthermore, for Foucault (Fornet-Betancourt, Becket, & Gomez-Muller, 1987; Foucault, 1984, 1990), the motivation for questioning our assumptions does not stem only from opening up possibilities for people that are in an unprivileged position. Instead, he puts emphasis on curiosity and the possibility to think otherwise in itself as a motivating force.

Butler (2004), in contrast, is stronger about positing the suffering of unrecognisable lives as the motor force. She thinks that what can make us want to sneak out of our known ways, to risk ontological insecurity, is to already live in a situation where the current possibilities of intelligibility do not allow our ways of living.

One does not drive to the limits for a thrill experience, or because limits are dangerous and sexy, or because it brings us into a titillating proximity with evil. One asks about the limits of ways of knowing because one has already run up against a crisis within the epistemological field in which one lives. (Butler, 2004, pp. 305-306)

I think that Butler here is giving an answer in sympathy with the notion of reflexivity emerging from the crisis produced in the clash between habitus and different fields or positionings. Nonetheless, Butler conceptualises this differently than Bourdieu. According to Adkins (2003) the Bourdieusian habitus is created in the field and submits to it. For Butler (1997a) the norms are never totally taken in by the subject, and they need to be ceaselessly reiterated by the subject – opening possibilities in each repetition to be resignified. Adkins draws on Butler (1999 as cited in Adkins 2003) to say that Bourdieu assumes that the incorporation and mimesis of the habitus from the field actually work effectively. According to Adkins (2003)

Bourdieu does not give space to the ambivalence that a subject might have towards its constituting field<sup>32</sup>. In that way, I think that Butler's (1997a) conceptualisation widens the notion of a misfit between habitus and field: it is not only when moving fields or positions but it is given generally because – to different extents – we never completely adapt to our fields.

According to Butler (2004) the crisis arises because discourses produce areas that are not validated or that are not able to be spoken about. It might be that this crisis emerges when the available possibilities of intelligibility for being a subject do not speak to us and we find ourselves needing other possibilities to challenge what it is currently oppressing us from our field.

For instance, Butler (1999) says in her preface to *Gender Trouble*.

The point was not to prescribe a new gendered way of life that might then serve as a model for readers of the text. Rather, the aim of the text was to open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized. One might wonder what use “opening up possibilities” finally is, but no one who has understood what it is to live in the social world as what is “impossible,” illegible, unrealizable, unreal, and illegitimate is likely to pose that question. (Butler, 1999, p. viii)

I think that Butler's (1999) argument, like Bourdieu's, points to how the idea of having different possibilities opened up is not about a conscious choice but about a need that one finds oneself into. In consonance, I argue that reflexive practices that question our assumptions are not possibly done in isolation, it cannot come from sameness or as a merely intellectual or conscious exercise. It is not about *wanting* to yield but about finding oneself yielding. What I add to Butler is the possibility of questioning and opening up other options previously unintelligible come from a concrete movement to other fields that facilitates the encounter with something that shakes our world. I propose that for being

---

<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, when discussing Bourdieu's possible determinism, some commentators, points towards the fact that the definition of habitus is more flexible and generative than what some critics warrant (Akram, Emerson, and Marsh, 2015; McNay, 1999). However, McNay (1999), even if being critical of Butler, acknowledges the lack of space for ambiguity is Bourdieu's model: “Although he is undoubtedly right to stress the ingrained nature of gender norms, he significantly underestimates the ambiguities and dissonances that exist in the way that men and women occupy masculine and feminine positions.” (McNay, 1999, p. 107)



reflexive in a critical and transforming way, I need to inhabit other fields or change my positioning because it is not something that I can do just cognitively or purposefully. For a new perspective to emerge, we need to inhabit and yield to a different field or positioning that dwells in us producing a different constellation of forces and in that way a different perspective (Nietzsche, 1968; Widder, 2012). For instance, Butler (1991) speaks about her encounter with a book about drag and how it changed her.

As a young person, I suffered for a long time, and I suspect many people have, from being told, explicitly or implicitly, that what I “am” is a copy, an imitation, a derivative example, a shadow of the real. Compulsory heterosexuality sets itself up as the original, the true, the authentic; the norm that determines the real implies that “being” lesbian is always a kind of miming, a vain effort to participate in the phantasmatic plenitude of naturalized heterosexuality which will always and only fail. And yet, I remember quite distinctly when I first read in Esther Newton’s *Mother Camp: Female Impersonators in America* that drag is not an imitation or a copy of some prior and true gender; according to Newton, drag enacts the very structure of impersonation by which any gender is assumed. (Butler, 1991, pp. 20-21)

I imagine Butler *stumbling against* this book that probably made quite apparent that the idea of an essential gender is an assumption that can be troubled. I imagine that in this encounter between Butler and this book she yielded to the – welcomed – foreignness of it. This might have helped her to explicitly contest the assumption of gender essentialism and in that way to critically develop feminist theories<sup>33</sup>.

I think it is quite apparent that at this juncture the practice of questioning our assumptions has taken a tonality of desubjugation. If we are *trapped* by our assumptions we need to yield to foreignness to be able to see them and criticise them, to break free of them. Through this, I am not assuming, though, that we are ever desubjugated. We keep on being a folding of the outside

---

<sup>33</sup> This assumption of gender essentialism was/is also present in feminist theory. Butler (1999) points out in the preface to *Gender Trouble* that she understands her text as part of feminist theory but critiquing feminism at the same time “It was and remains my view that any feminist theory that restricts the meaning of gender in the presuppositions of its own practice sets up exclusionary gender norms within feminism, often with homophobic consequences.” (1999, pp. vii-viii)

(Deleuze 2006) but maybe we have more options, more possibilities of movement.

Elaborating on Foucault's text *What is critique?* Butler (2004) relates knowledge and its rationalities to the subjugation of the subject. It is when we stop taking for granted the assumptions of certain knowledge that we see its limit and we stop being subjugated to it.

Indeed, another way to talk about this dynamic within critique is to say that rationalization meets its limits in desubjugation. If the desubjugation of the subject emerges at the moment in which the episteme constituted through rationalization exposes its limit, then desubjugation marks precisely the fragility and transformability of the epistemics of power. (Butler, 2004, p. 316)

The activity of critique is not apart from the formation and stability of the self. If we are socially constituted through the discourses that bring the limits of intelligibility of what we might become, to expose and criticise the assumptions of a discourse that has been part of our constitution implies to risk the ontological stability that we had through subjecting to a discourse.

But if that self forming is done in disobedience to the principles by which one is formed, then virtue becomes the practice by which the self forms itself in desubjugation, which is to say that it risks its deformation as a subject, occupying that ontologically insecure position which poses the question anew: who will be a subject here, and what will count as a life, a moment of ethical questioning which requires that we break the habits of judgment in favor of a riskier practice that seeks to yield artistry from constraint. (Butler, 2004, p. 322)

Yielding to foreignness, to that refreshing foreignness that promises desubjugation, asks us to bear ontological insecurity, to step on shaky ground and risk ourselves to become differently.

Butler (2004) argues that criticism implies questioning our ways of knowing, which are also the ones that have produced us. This is why questioning our assumptions is not merely an intellectual exercise because it entails an ontological risk.

To be governed is not only to have a form imposed upon one's existence, but to be given the terms within which existence will and will

not be possible. A subject will emerge in relation to an established order of truth, but it can also take a point of view on that established order that retrospectively suspends its own ontological ground. (Butler, 2004, p. 312)

Hence, yielding to foreignness can be transforming, but this transformation can be dreaded because it implies certain ontological insecurity. There can be forces that ask for transformation and others for sameness. When we are in a subjugated and unprivileged position, we might find ourselves more prone to question ours and social assumptions.

## **Conclusions**

In this chapter, I have stressed how Foucault (1986, 1990) and Butler (2005) are emphatic about saying that the available social discourses provide the limits of what is intelligible. That is, discourses shape the possible ways in which people can be reflexive about themselves. Foucault's later writings (1986, 1990) suggest that we are reflexive through establishing a relation to ourselves that is always socially mediated. Hence, there is no possibility of standing outside ourselves and our social involvements to reflexively question what we are taking for granted. We are always thinking about ourselves through cultural discourses.

On his part, Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977, 1984, 1989; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) underscores how our decisions are mostly non-conscious, led by our bodily adaptation – habitus – to the social fields that we belong to. In that sense, when we are mostly in contact with a homogenous social field, where a few discourses dictate what is valid, there can be a stagnation in the way of being aware of ourselves. The possibility of reflexivity emerges in the mismatch of habitus and field. Inspired by a Bourdieusian understanding (McNay, 1999), when meeting foreignness the assumptions that we have been holding become visible and we can move on to think otherwise and become otherwise.

Bourdieu's notion that reflexivity emerges from a concrete movement of fields or positions leads me to think that reflexivity is produced when we can *move*

*between frontiers*. We never step out of society, we just move among its borders. As in travelling, we do not know what the new surroundings will bring about on us, we can just be available to be moved and transformed by them in unexpected ways. I argue that to question our assumptions we need to yield to a meeting – a clash, an encounter, a dissonance – with foreignness.

In the context of research in the social sciences, if I yield to foreignness, my perspective will be affected and I will move my position and identity. I think that I can relate to myself being open to *find myself* perceiving things differently. This asks for an attitude of not needing to rule myself, to know everything of who I am in advance. I believe that this implies a certain risk and insecurity. In contrast, holding on to an academic identity or school of thought can bring a sense of security and stability that might be thwarted when yielding to foreignness.

For me, the creation of this chapter, and this thesis, has been a *yielding to the foreignness* of less familiar fields as poststructuralism, posthumanism and sociology. Even if I had already an affinity with these fields, my main field was psychotherapy. It has been in the recent years that my dwelling in different fields has led me to place greater challenges and thus transformations on my academic and professional role as a psychotherapist.

However, this is not the only foreignness that I am yielding to: I am a psychotherapist undertaking a PhD away from Chile, my country of origin, where I had an established private practice and I was researching and teaching drawing on and speaking directly to psychotherapy. I am in a foreign country, language and institution. I am a foreigner in the UK, and in a UK living through turbulent times. This foreignness has brought critical attention to the assumptions that I was holding when more thoroughly immersed in the field of psychotherapy in my birth country and within my familiar institutions. This has also shaken my sense of security and identity in the sense that I cannot rely as before on previous taken-for-granted certainties. Moreover, Chile, at the time when I am finishing this PhD, is going through a huge social crisis. It

seems that the shaking of my grounding assumptions is pervasive. But, there is promise in this shaking, this chapter is about that: together with the chaos, these crises might also enable the foreignness of what is unexpected and allows us to question what we assume and so we can become differently.

The notion of *foreignness* is something far from being definite and clear. In the present chapter, I have drawn on English translations of the French authors Foucault and Bourdieu. I write in British English, my second language. Foreignness is in the pores of this text. A foreignness with no fixed boundaries. Foreign to what? We are even foreigners to our own selves (Kristeva, 1991). The frontiers of what is foreign are not stable. Butler (1999) in the preface to *Gender Trouble* reflects about how her book draws on ‘French Theory’, but this very name is an American creation. She thinks that it is in America where different theories tend to be grouped together, unlike in France where French intellectuals have their loyal and exclusive readership. So, her text is American and foreign to America, French and foreign to France. Where should we draw the boundaries? There are no stable frontiers.

The word foreignness might have demeaning connotations; a foreigner – not only someone from another nationality but also someone from another religion, sexual orientation, discipline, theoretical ascription, etc. – might be invalidated or unwelcomed. Yet, in this chapter, I have underscored the necessity of foreignness. Through risking ourselves to foreign terrains we might be able to question our assumptions. Reflexivity might arise in contexts where diversity and dissidence are present; contexts where foreignness is not dreaded or disparaged. Moreover, the motivation for questioning assumptions – and through that opening up different possibilities – can be propelled by being in a situation of unprivileged foreignness.

I am also using the word *yielding*. By yielding, I mean giving up on our mastering efforts. From this perspective, reflexivity is something produced through a movement where I let myself be affected by the dissonance brought by the foreignness of an unexplored or unfamiliar field or position; I yield to it.

In that sense, it is different from an activity that I can do in isolation and from a position of mastery. There is ambiguity in how I am using the word yielding; it is not something that could be categorised as completely voluntary or involuntary. It requires that I let myself be affected by foreignness but the extent to which I let myself be affected does not depend on my masterful decision. With Bourdieu (1977), I am reminded that the keenness to question my assumptions is not given by a nice attribute of myself but in relation to where I am situated in the fields that I inhabit and to what is at stake for me. With Butler (2004) we take this risk because there is a need for desubjugation to discourses that constrain our possibilities of becoming intelligible subjects.

When I risk myself to read a paper, a book, to hear someone from a different tradition – which entails different theorisations, different ways of practising, of teaching, of evaluating, of making institutions – yielding to its foreignness, I might become able to see assumptions that I was holding. In this chapter, I have done this through my studies of social theorists such as Foucault, Butler and Bourdieu. This has also brought instability in my sense of self and in my identity as a psychotherapist – probably an instability that I was needing.

Reflexivity, then, is not an activity done alone by a sovereign self. We cannot be reflexive alone. As Butler (2005) says “I have a relation to myself, but I have it in the context of an address to an other” (p. 131). I need the other/otherness to ignite my reflexivity. She argues:

The self's reflexivity is incited by another, so that one person's discourse leads another person into self-reflection. The self does not simply begin to examine itself through the forms of rationality at hand. Those forms of rationality are delivered through discourse, in the form of an address, and they arrive as an incitement, a form of seduction, an imposition or demand from outside to which one yields. (2005, p. 125)

This gives me the lead to say that reflexivity, in the sense of questioning our assumptions, is spurred in yielding to foreignness. We are not reflexive, I think, when we already know how we think about something, what we are going to write or how we are going to act. Being explicitly reflexive about our assumptions would be an *a posteriori* attempt to make some sense of the

dissonance that is brought about when we step out of our usual circuits and we yield ourselves to be affected by foreignness. Not forgetting that this sense-making entails a different way of relating to oneself – a production of oneself –that might be soon enough shaken again by another encounter with foreignness.

In this chapter, I have developed the possibility of reflexivity in the sense of questioning our assumptions while sustaining a social and performative conceptualisation of subjectivity. I have argued that when we yield to foreignness our way of being aware of ourselves, of relating to ourselves, shifts, and hence our previous assumptions are made visible and we might be able to explicitly question them. In that sense, I have started exploring the Foucauldian understanding of reflexivity as a way of relating to ourselves that is producing our very selves. Having started to elaborate on a notion of reflexivity as ways of relating, the question that pops out for me is, how am I to think about the different types of reflexivity that are offered in the literature and in our academic practices and lives in general in relation to this notion of reflexivity as ways of relating that produce? In the next chapter, chapter four, I develop further the notion of reflexivity as ways of relating to ourselves that produce and I think of the different reflexivities in these terms, that is, I analyse, how the different reflexivities offered in the literature enable different ways of relating to ourselves generating different productions.

## Chapter 4: Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup> A very slightly different version of this chapter was published in November 2019 in the journal *Qualitative Inquiry* (Online First). The paper has the same title than the chapter and myself as the only author. It can be found at: <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800419885408>. SAGE, my publisher, explicitly permits to include the published paper (in the original submission, accepted or published version) as part of the thesis including the case that the thesis is available in the Institutional Repository. The following link has the information. <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/journal-author-archiving-policies-and-re-use>





## Introduction

Reflexivity has been thought about, troubled and reconceptualised through the years. In an inclusive spirit, Finlay (2017) speaks about *reflexivities* - in plural. She underscores how reflexivity is used and conceptualised differently according to the epistemological and methodological stance that we hold. Aligning with a pluralistic understanding, I propose to think about these different reflexivities as *different affective ways of relating to oneself that produce*. No one way of being reflexive is better than the other in general terms because each of them has different productions that may be relevant in different contexts – by also producing these very contexts.

My proposition is not pluralist in the sense of claiming from a neutral place that every type of reflexivity has the same relevance and that it is only a matter of choosing the most appropriate in each context. In contrast – as I develop in the chapter - I am putting forward that each way of being reflexive works as an *apparatus* (Barad, 2007) that produces the boundaries that delimit, and ontologically create, its objects (including the subjectivity/ies involved). It is because each reflexivity produces a different world that they cannot be judged as better than the others in general terms – as if there was only one objective world where we can compare and measure the quality or usefulness of each reflexivity.

I am proposing to think about reflexivity *as ways of relating to oneself that produce*. We engage with ourselves in particular and *affective* ways when making sense of ourselves (or others or texts). The way in which we are reflexive is related to how we conceive the self – even if we are not explicitly aware of this conceptualisation. For example, when I try to make sense of what is happening to me by being attentive to subtle sensations in my chest as if waiting for the words to come from my body; implicit in this is the idea of an embodied self moved by feelings. Furthermore, from a Foucauldian perspective (Butler, 1997; Deleuze, 2006; Foucault, 1990) – as I explored in the past chapter – our ways of relating to ourselves are also continuously

producing this very self. I hope it is clear that I am not thinking about reflexivity as an activity that someone exercises as if the subject and its reflexivity were two separate entities. Instead, I see reflexivity as an *inevitable* activity that is both expressive of a sense of self and continuously creating this very self. As there is not an ontological separation between the subject and its reflexive activity, it does not make sense to think about a sovereign, bounded, already formed subject engaging in reflexive activity as an optional and voluntary activity.

I propose to think about the different theoretical stances on reflexivity as different ways of relating to oneself. For example, a more discursive reflexivity asks us to relate to ourselves assuming that our self-experience is not foundational but draws from different social discourses. This way of relating enables certain forms of subjectivity, opens certain questions, allows certain actions, etc. In that sense, I am engaging with different theories about reflexivity looking to see, on the one hand, what notion of subjectivity they imply, and on the other, what ways of relating they enable and what their possible productions are.

Relevantly, through the text, I underscore that these ways of relating are also *affective*<sup>35</sup>. Brown (2006) reminds us how psychoanalysis can be useful for research, among other things, because it underscores how our learning from texts is an affective enterprise. Bondi (2012) also brings psychoanalysis to show how research tasks require emotional processing, for instance in receiving critical feedback on our work. As a researcher, when, for instance, I am reading a text, I am not only trying to make sense of the ideas but I am *affectively* relating to them. Maybe I read the text<sup>36</sup> as if I could completely

---

<sup>35</sup> Later in the thesis, in chapter seven on experience, I will use the concept affect from posthumanism. However, in this chapter, I am using the term affect and affective in a more general manner, pointing at the emotional engagement.

<sup>36</sup> How I read the text is not a sovereign choice. The text *invites* certain ways of being read. Also, the conditions within which I happen to be reading it play into how I relate to it e.g., that it is sunny and I hear my colleagues typing quickly, that I feel rested, that caffeine is making an effect, etc.

understand it and then disregard it as not worthy of my attention. I might act as if my understanding could capture and judge the ideas of the text. Maybe I relate to the text as an invitation that takes me to places that I cannot foresee – I allow myself to be taken by the text. Or I might relate to it as a friend who is challenging my ideas and with whom I want to have a heated discussion – I relate to myself seeking to be moved. I think that each way of relating generates different possibilities. I might create a chapter that criticises and undermines a theory with the first way. The second may enable my desire to discuss the topic further. The third might produce the development of a renewed understanding.

Informed by psychoanalysis (Benjamin, 1990, 2004; Ogden, 1988; Winnicott, 1971), I wonder what is happening relationally and affectively when we need to, say, drastically reject one conceptualisation of reflexivity – or reflexivity altogether. I think that academic conceptualisations are not only a cognitive matter; instead, I think about the academic creation also as an affective and relational undertaking. When we attempt to criticise, build on, integrate, argue against, and so on, we do so also as an affective operation.

Along these lines, in what may seem counterintuitive, I bring Barad (2003, 2007) to think about reflexivity even when she explicitly rejects this concept. She proposes, informed by Haraway (1997), to move to diffraction as a better alternative. Even though this is the case, I use her concepts to inform my argument. What I put forward draws from Barad's arguments and is critical of part of her argument – namely, what I consider the dichotomising operation of rejecting reflexivity<sup>37</sup> and embracing diffraction. I bring Barad (2007) into the conversation to think about different conceptualisations of reflexivity as *apparatuses* that draw the boundaries of what is considered a subject, an object, a meaningful concept, an emotion, etc. In that sense, with Barad,

---

<sup>37</sup> It is important to acknowledge here that Barad's (2007) notion of reflexivity is narrowed down to what I would call an *essentialist* and *transparent* reflexivity (later in the text these concepts will be explained) that assumes that we can actually capture and represent the involvement of the researcher as a separable agent.

reflexivities as apparatuses not only produce a subjectivity but more broadly produce a world. For instance, a discursive reflexivity would be an apparatus that produces a subject that is, say, permeated by social discourses that enable its experience; it also produces emotions that are not conceived as personal creations, etc. Moreover, taking Barad's concept of *intra-action*, how we engage in certain way of being reflexive is not produced by the decision of a subject as standing outside its material-semantic 'surroundings'. Instead, the reflexivity works as an apparatus that produces the boundaries that delineate my very subjectivity, the object that I 'observe' and in general the world that appears in that particular *agential cut*.

To aid us to think about the ways of relating to ourselves that we find ourselves engaged in, I offer the tool of a *threefold questioning device* to characterise how we are engaging with ourselves. This device enables to be 'meta-reflexive'<sup>38</sup> about the way in which we are reflexive. The first question inquires into how transparent or opaque we are assuming our access to ourselves/others/texts/(...) to be. The second asks about what understanding of subjectivity (essentialist, relational, social/relational, intra-active, etc.) is implicit in our way of being reflexive. And the third asks about the affective quality with which we engage with ourselves/others/texts/(...). Aided by these questions about the different ways of relating, I think about what kinds of subjectivity might be produced, what kind of questions are opened and foreclosed, and in general what productions and uses reflexivities can have.

In the next sections, I explore how reflexivity has both an implicit notion of subjectivity and produces subjectivities. Following from that, I bring Barad's contribution to think about the different reflexivities as apparatuses that produce. Afterwards, I make use of the threefold questioning device I have introduced as a tool that might help to qualify how we are relating at any given moment or, in Barad's terms, to qualify what kind of apparatus we are using.

---

<sup>38</sup> 'Meta-reflexivity' with scared quotes because it is not about the possibility of neutrally observe how we are relating to ourselves. Instead, I understand that to think about how we are relating to ourselves is another way of relating to ourselves that produces.

Finally, drawing on psychoanalysis and on Barad's notion of intra-action, I suggest that the use of these different reflexivities or apparatuses is an affective task that works largely outside our conscious intentions.

### **Implicit notions of subjectivity**

The assertion that our notion of reflexivity has an implicit notion of subjectivity has already been highlighted in the literature (Davies et al., 2004; Pillow, 2003; G. Rose, 1997; Shaw, 2016). For example, as a psychotherapist, I could think that a client is assuming, say, a notion of self as knowable, rational and unitary. His way of practicing reflexivity is limited by the implicit notion of selfhood he is holding. Perhaps he tries to make sense of himself – he relates to himself – through observing and logically analysing his thoughts and actions. Maybe if he could think/feel differently about what a self can be, his way of being reflexive could also change.

Our ways of being reflexive in research are also of course shaped by our notions of selfhood. For example, Etherington (2017), writes on the use of reflexivity for counselling and psychotherapy research arguing that the personal is interwoven with our research products and that we should be transparent about our subjective participation. She says: "Reflexivity creates transparency by providing information about the contexts in which data are created and located, and the researcher's part in the co-construction of new knowledge, allowing the reader to judge its trustworthiness" (p. 90). I think she is interested in a way of understanding reflexivity – to relate to it – as if we could actually be conscious of ourselves and how the context is shaping us. Her notion of the self is that it is knowable and somehow separable from its creations. What does this produce? Maybe a research practice where researchers feel more responsible for their own involvement, having the ethical duty of being transparent about it. It might also enable certainty and definiteness in our research processes and conclusions. In this sense, I am emphasising how the different reflexivities *work*, what they produce and not if one is truer than the other.

Pillow (2003) shows how reflexivity, in its definition and uses, is related to the notion of subjectivity that the authors are holding. She says:

Thus, if my subject, either myself or an “other,” is knowable the possibility that I can then know this subject through better reflexive methods is attainable. On the other hand, an understanding of a subject as postmodern, as multiple, as unknowable, as shifting, situates the purposes and practices of research, and the uses of reflexivity, quite differently. (Pillow, 2003, p. 180)

She is proposing the notion of uncomfortable reflexivity to refer to reflexive practices that stay with the multiplicity and unknowability of the subject. This is a different reflexivity with different productions. Conceiving the self in this postmodern way changes the ways in which I relate to myself and this produces myself differently.

G. Rose (1997) argues that transparent ways of conceiving reflexivity conceptualise the self as something prior and already formed waiting to be discovered. She argues: “If the process of reflexivity changes what is being reflected upon, then there is no ‘transparent’ self waiting to be revealed” (G. Rose, 1997, p. 313). Probably Etherington (2017), in her aim of showing how the researcher is part of the construction of the research, exemplifies this transparent notion of reflexivity. G. Rose (1997) is critical of the practice of situating oneself as a researcher – as if one could actually know where one is situated – and proposes instead to show the uncertainties in the process. She thinks that this practice can generate a questioning of the authority of academic knowledge.

I think that these texts can work to broaden the possible conceptualisations and uses of reflexivity. Nonetheless, with these challenges to the conceptualisation of the self as knowable in a transparent way, arguably, the very practice of reflexivity is put into question. Jackson and Mazzei (2012b), for example, imply that reflexivity entails a stable and knowable subject, and as they move to other ways of thinking about subjectivity, they reject the notion of reflexivity.

In our process of flattening and folding, we do not seek more and more reflexivity that reveals more and more about the researcher's ways of knowing. We seek to unsettle the "I" of both the researcher and researched who is a static and singular subject. (p. 10)

Do not we need at least a certain reification of the self in order to be able to be reflexive on it? What happens when our conceptualisation of the self is that it is not essential but constantly produced through social discourses? As I developed in the previous chapter, Davies and her collaborators (2004, p. 361) put this point across positing that reflexive writing relies on a notion of an already existing self – the one that is reflexively explored. They underscore how this is at odds with conceiving a fluctuating and fragmented subject always in process of being constituted by discourse. At this juncture, the second point that I mentioned earlier, namely that the reflexive practices are also producing a self, is called forth.

### **Reflexivities producing subjectivities**

As I started arguing in the last chapter, my argument of reflexivity as ways of relating that produce assumes that the subject is continuously constituted. The notion that reflexivity is a way of relating to ourselves that is producing this very self is influenced by Foucault (1986, 1990, 1997). He emphasises how we take ourselves as objects in different ways – drawing from the social discourses available – producing ourselves in this action. Therefore, the argument that situates reflexivity and a continuously socially constituted subject as incompatible is turned on its head: reflexivity is the operation that allows the subject to be continuously socially constituted.

Deleuze (2006), elaborates how Foucault develops in his late work, specifically in *The use of pleasure* (Foucault, 1990) a thematic that was hauntingly present in his earlier work, namely the notion of *folding*. Foucault turns to see the self – with the notion of 'interiority' that it entails – as being produced in a process of folding of the social or the 'outside'. The categories of external/society and internal/self are troubled. "The outside is not a fixed limit but a moving matter animated by peristaltic movements, folds and foldings that together make up



an inside: they are not something other than the outside, but precisely the inside of the outside” (Deleuze, 2006, pp. 96-97). What would be the ‘external’ social discourses are folded in producing an ‘internal’ space constitutive of the self. Therefore, the self is created in a reflexive relation to oneself – a turning in, a folding – that is never apart from the power-relations, including the knowledge practices, which instate it in the first place.

Butler (1997) takes Foucault’s input to think about how power is productive of the subject. Even if power appears at first as external, it becomes internal through a turning on itself in which it assumes a psychic form, giving a sense of self and identity to the subject. Importantly, Butler insists that it is the reflexive movement of turning upon oneself, which is produced through power, the one that inaugurates the distinction of an ‘inside’ – a psychic space – and an ‘outside’.

The form this power takes is relentlessly marked by a figure of turning, a turning back upon oneself or even a turning on oneself. This figure operates as part of the explanation of how a subject is produced, and so there is no subject, strictly speaking, who makes this turn. On the contrary, the turn appears to function as a tropological inauguration of the subject, a founding moment whose ontological status remains permanently uncertain. (Butler, 1997, pp. 3-4)

Taking this way of thinking about reflexivity as a relating to – and through this producing – oneself, I am stressing that we can keep on thinking about reflexivity *and* having a relational and socially traversed notion of subjectivity. When thinking about reflexivity as ways of relating to oneself, there is no previous and sovereign self that exercises this reflexivity, but reflexivity is the way in which ‘we’ turn upon ourselves, we relate to ourselves – not from a sovereign place – continuously producing this very self.

The relation to oneself is a form of self-knowledge that draws from “all the techniques of moral and human sciences that go to make up a knowledge of the subject” (Deleuze, 2006, p. 103). In that sense, the theories about reflexivity are offering ways of understanding and relating to oneself that create oneself in this very movement. In understanding oneself one also produces

oneself – one draws the boundaries of what a self is through the *conceptual apparatus* (Barad, 2007) of a particular conceptualisation of reflexivity.

In the next section, I will develop the Barad's argument around her notion of *apparatuses* to think further about the different reflexivities as ways of relating. Barad (2007) is informed by both poststructuralism, in particular Foucault and Butler, and Bohr's quantum physics.

### **Reflexivities as apparatuses**

In this chapter, I have been proposing to think about reflexivity as affective ways of relating, positing that each form of reflexivity can be useful in certain contexts because each way of relating enables different subjectivities and productivities in general. To think further about this, I introduce Barad's (2007) concepts of intra-action, apparatus and agential cut. In what follows, I present these concepts to relate them directly to my notion of reflexivities as ways of relating.

In Barad's perspective, what we conceive as 'bounded units' are not foundational but emerge through intra-actions. As she says:

The notion of *intra-action* (in contrast to the usual "interaction," which presumes the prior existence of intendent entities or relata) represents a profound conceptual shift. It is through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of the component of phenomena become determinate and that particular concepts (that is, particular material articulations of the world) become meaningful. (p. 139)

With her notion of intra-action, Barad wants to stop thinking in dichotomies like human and non-human, material and conceptual as if they were categorically different. She proposes that they are only differentiated through particular intra-actions. Importantly, Barad (2007) is drawing on Bohr to postulate that concepts are not abstract and separated from the material. For conveying this, the notion of apparatus becomes fundamental. It is in the specific material arrangement that an apparatus provides, that a concept becomes meaningful. As Barad explains:

According to Bohr, theoretical concepts (e.g., position and momentum) are not ideational in character but rather specific physical arrangements. For example, the notion of position cannot be presumed to be an individually determinate attribute of independently existing objects. Rather, position has meaning only when an apparatus with an appropriate set of fixed parts is used. And furthermore, any measurement of position using this apparatus cannot be attributed to some abstract, independently existing object but rather is a property of the phenomenon – the inseparability of the object and the measuring agencies. (p. 139)

In that sense, we cannot think about concepts separated from the apparatuses that they are intra-acting with for them to become meaningful. In a way, the concepts come to exist in specific intra-actions and not in abstract. Barad, applies this to herself; thinking about how she is relating to her conceptualisations – doing what I qualify as a meta-reflexive move. She is researching Bohr to build her own theory. In doing so, she is careful not to say that she has the ‘correct’ interpretation of Bohr’s work as if such thing could exist in abstract and absolute terms. She tries not to put forward what Bohr was ‘really’ thinking as apart from her “own interpretative apparatus” (p. 121). That is, her understanding of Bohr, is an *interpretative apparatus* that delineates (produces boundaries) that bring to life the concepts of Bohr as she is using them. Bohr’s concepts (as she understands them) come alive and meaningful because her interpretative apparatus is intra-acting (with) them. This production of boundaries is what she calls *agential cuts*. Without these boundaries what is, is indeterminate and not meaningful. An agential cut does not act only in semantic terms, it is not only what makes something meaningful but what makes something exist in ontic terms. As Barad (2007) explains:

Apparatuses enact agential cuts that produce determinate boundaries and properties of “entities” within phenomena, where “phenomena” are the ontological inseparability of agentially intra-acting components. That is agential cuts are at once ontic and semantic. It is only through specific agential intra-actions that the boundaries and properties of “components” of phenomena become determinate and that particular articulations become meaningful. In the absence of specific agential intra-actions, these ontic-semantic boundaries are indeterminate. In short, the apparatus specifies an agential cut that enacts a resolution (within the phenomenon) of the semantic, as well as ontic,

indeterminacy. *Hence apparatuses are boundary making practices.* (p. 148)

As it might be already implied in the previous paragraphs, Barad thinks of apparatuses not just in terms of the instruments that scientists use. Instead, bringing Foucault in the conversation, Barad thinks of the apparatuses as discursive practices. She defines them in this way:

Discourse is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said. Discursive practices define what counts as meaningful statements. Statements are not the mere utterances of the originating consciousness of a unified subject; rather, statements and subjects emerge from a field of possibilities. This field of possibilities is not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity. (2007, pp. 146-147)

According to Barad's (2007) argument, discursive practices create the boundaries that enable us to make sense in an otherwise indeterminate complexity. They are not fixed nor transcendental but historical and always open to be modified. Discursive practices create reality in the same way that the apparatus enacts the agential cuts that makes intelligible, and thus existing, a determinate object of study. Barad thinks of the apparatuses as discursive practices and the other way around.

The basic idea to understand that it is not merely the case that human concepts are embodied in apparatuses, but rather that apparatuses *are* discursive practices, where the latter are understood as specific material reconfigurings through which "objects" and "subjects" are produced. (p. 148)

How we think about the subject – individually, relationally or socially transversed – appears through the conceptual (and material) apparatus that we are using. For instance, when we are using the notion of a transparent and more essentialist reflexivity, this can be thought of as a conceptual apparatus that brings about a unitary and knowable subject. "That is, the agential cut enacts a resolution *within* the phenomenon of the inherent ontological (and semantic) indeterminacy." (Barad 2007, p. 140)

I think that the different forms of reflexivity make us look at ourselves/produce ourselves in particular ways. As Barad (2007) says: "Knowing entails specific

practices through which the world is differentially articulated and accounted for.” (p. 149)

I take Barad’s argument in this way: everything is intra-acting (with) everything else, there are no foundational boundaries that essentially distinguish one thing from the other. As Barad says: “Outside of particular agential intra-actions, ‘words’ and ‘things’ are indeterminate” (p. 150). Instead, the boundaries are created through conceptual (and material) apparatuses that make agential cuts. So, if we bring in the apparatus of a relational and opaque reflexivity this will draw certain boundaries that might shape, for instance, forms of subjectivity that are permeable and do not intend to master themselves. Crucially, our ontoepistemological assumptions shift as we use one apparatus or another. They shift because the apparatus brings about the semantic meaningfulness and ontic reality of what is shaped. That is, thinking of transparent reflexivity as an apparatus, this apparatus brings about/creates the boundaries of what we assume to be, say, a unitary and responsible subject. Before the apparatus of transparent reflexivity, which is not concepts alone, enacted this agential cut, there was not a unitary subject to ascribe responsibility to. It is in this sense that our conceptual apparatuses *matter*, because they create the realities that we form part of. Importantly, the apparatuses are not stable, they are also intra-active phenomena. In that sense, they are in an ongoing possibility of change.

Significantly, inspired by Barad (2007), the concepts that we use are not apart from our material engagement. In that sense, my use of, say, poststructuralism is intra-acting (with) the space I inhabit when reading and writing about it, with my economic situation, with my feelings, with my relationships, etc. In that sense, it is not that I use a concept and apply it in an abstract way; instead, this concept is intra-acting (with) my life in ways that go well beyond my intentions and awareness. “The agential cut and the formation of a phenomenon depends on the site, the discursive interpretations, and the

subjects and objects intra-acting with and through it.” (Højgaard & Søndergaard, 2011, p. 12)

The sense of what a subject is appears in an agential cut, intra-actively; therefore, my ontoepistemological assumptions are not stable. At one point, for instance, intra-acting with anxiety, instability in my personal relationships and my sense of belonging, I might be performing a transparent reflexivity, yielding a sense of stable self: ‘this is who I am’. In an academic context, intra-acting with papers, secure in some institutional and economic stability, it might be easier to hold uncertainty; practice an opaque reflexivity and this might yield a sense of shifting, unstable and permeable subjectivity.

From this understanding, it does not follow to portray one type of reflexivity – or reflexivity broadly – as better or worse than other options. Instead, each reflexivity, understood as a particular way of relating to oneself – and constantly producing that self in this gesture – is a particular apparatus or discursive practice that enacts an agential cut producing the boundaries that give shape and meaning.

In the following section, I give myself to the task of particularising these different ways of relating through proposing a threefold questioning device to aid us in thinking about in which particular ways we are exercising reflexivity. These questions point towards different conceptualisations that produce, through agential cuts, the boundaries of what we consider our world at that moment, including our notion and sense of subjectivity.

### **Different reflexivities producing differently**

I put forward that the kind of reflexivity that we are enacting rests upon the kind of relationship we are holding towards ourselves. As I have mentioned, I propose a threefold questioning device to qualify how we are relating to ourselves. I do not see these questions as requiring answers that reflect the ‘truth’ of how we are ‘really’ using reflexivity, neither do I imply that these questions exhaust a characterisation of reflexivity; instead, I see these question as tools for making distinctions that might be useful.

In my conceptualisation, reflexivity is an unintentional way of relating to ourselves that is all the time producing. However, we can explicitly think about how we are relating to ourselves; that is, we can be meta-reflexive. The threefold questioning device that I offer, is a tool for doing that. Crucially, I think of this meta-reflexivity also as a way of relating that produces and not as reflecting how things 'are'<sup>39</sup>.

The first question of the three-fold questioning device, inquires into how transparent or opaque we assume our access to ourselves/others/texts/(...) to be. A transparent reflexivity might lay on a relationship to myself where I think that I can observe myself as if I could stand outside myself and look through. It might be that my conceptualisation of the subject is more essentialist, more relational, social/relational or intra-active, in each case I would think that I can assert unambiguously and transparently what is going on. Therefore, a transparent reflexivity as an apparatus (Barad, 2007) might yield a production of unitary and stable subjectivity, a sense of clearly understanding and seeing oneself/others/relationships/texts/etc., a knowledge that fills in the gaps with certain authority, an analysis where the responsibilities of the people involved are foregrounded, a sense of identity that empowers groups of people, etc.

An example of a transparent reflexivity with a relational/social understanding of the subject is put forward by standpoint theories. Hartsock (2006) has underlined how standpoint theories criticises the possibility of a subject accessing their experience without mediation. She underscores how the subject is formed through social relationships and to acquire consciousness of this formation – and changing these relational configurations – is an objective of standpoint theories. "This is for me an important aspect of standpoint theories: they are not about individuals reporting their experience but groups coming to understand the social relations in which they are involved" (Hartsock, 2006, p.

---

<sup>39</sup> As I developed in the previous chapter, we can bring to explicit attention how we have changed our way of relating to ourselves, how we have changed our assumptions, and that conscious elaboration is also a meta-reflexivity. However, this meta-reflexivity is only possible because an unintentional change has already taken place in our reflexive ways of relating to ourselves.

179). Arguably, here there is also the assumption that the subjects can transparently know the ways in which they are socially engaged. I think that this assumption of transparency – the belief in the possibility of actually knowing how one is and has been socially formed – allows a sense of empowerment. It gives the possibility of not naturalising one's situation – especially when there is unfairness in it – and to do something about it, that is, to change the social ensembles that one is part of.

Another way of being reflexive on myself that allows more opacity will not assume that I can transparently know what is going on. Opacity assumes that there is something in between what is happening and our narrative of it – the unconscious, not articulated dynamics of relating, social discourses, etc.- that implies that there is no direct access to *experience*. Psychoanalysis can be very helpful in this area. Bion (1970) explicitly asks us to tolerate uncertainty and not knowing. He posits that when we think we know we saturate something preventing further learning. “An analyst with such a mind is one who is incapable of learning because he is satisfied” (Bion, 1970, p. 29). Also, Bollas (1987) argues that there is much known at an existential and felt level that does not translate into verbal conscious articulation. Bondi (2014), informed by Bollas, says: “I have acknowledged the limitations of ‘transparent’ self-reflexivity and introduced the idea of knowledge that is embodied but unthought” (Bondi, 2014, p. 8). This might produce a researcher or a psychotherapist that relies on intuitive and bodily feelings to advance their inquiry. At the same time, it can produce a piece of work that does not want to close down meaning.

I do not want to claim that opacity is assured in research – or in psychotherapy – because of holding a psychoanalytic understanding. There are, of course, different theories and nuances within psychoanalysis. For example, Young and Frosh (2009) distinguish ways of bringing psychoanalysis to research into interpretative and disruptive ways. The first tries to find a truth or a more fixed account of what is happening whilst the second would be continuously disrupting and opening up new meanings.



Hollway and Jefferson (2013) are situated in the first category (Lapping, 2016; Young & Frosh, 2009). Hollway and Jefferson (2013) argue that the interviewees – and anybody – do not have a transparent access to themselves. The research participants are defended subjects and the researcher can get to an understanding of what is going through analysing their countertransference. However, contradictorily, this analysis can be quite transparent: for example, assuming that the researcher can know something that the participant does not<sup>40</sup>. In that sense, this understanding has been criticised for fixing (Lapping, 2016) the meaning of the participants. For example, Holmes (2013), drawing on their proposal, produces quite a transparent interpretation of a research participant: “Emma here is adopting a child-like, helpless position in relation to the interviewer. By evoking concern in those with whom she interacts she is more likely to receive their care.” (Holmes, 2013, p. 166)

I think that an opaque reflexivity with a relational-social understanding of subjectivity is present in Butler’s work (Butler, 1997, 2005). This relational-social and opaque reflexivity might be performed through a critical way of relating to myself where I am questioning my thoughts and actions, not believing that they are foundational because there are social discourses wider than I am that I inevitably draw upon. Considering the social discourses in being reflexive might yield a subjectivity that is critical of itself and wider social dynamics. It might be that in this critical approach some suspicious distance to my ‘experiences’ is created.

The second question inquiries into how is our understanding of subjectivity is (essentialist, relational, social/relational, intra-active, etc.). This inquiry has been the interest of many authors. To mention a few, within psychoanalysis there has been a move towards relational ways of understanding subjectivity in American relational psychoanalysis (Mitchell & Aron, 2013), here there is a rejection of the notion of the subject as driven by instincts and instead the subject is understood

---

<sup>40</sup> Hollway and Jefferson (2013) argue that the potential power imbalance produced here – where the researcher could be patronizing towards the interviewee – can be avoided because the researchers are also subject to the same kind of analysis than their participants.

as thoroughly relational (Mitchell, 1981, 2000; Mitchell & Aron, 2013). Gendlin (1997), proposes to understand the self as relational and processual – not only always influenced by others and its environment but constituted through them. I believe that in psychotherapy being reflexive with a relational understanding enables less focus on pathology (which is a more essentialist notion) and a focus on how different ways of relating might propitiate change. (Serra Undurraga, 2016)

Going beyond a relational perspective that only includes relationships, Butler (1997, 2005) speaks about the formation of subjectivity through the social, she does not imply that the subject and the social exist as previous entities that then relate but that the social is productive of subjectivities. Barad (2003, 2007) proposes the concept of intra-action rather than interaction, where she includes the social and material dimensions. I believe this can yield a sense of decentred humanness: aware of how our constant engagements with the material non-human are enabling our existence and experience.

The third question is: In which affective/relational modality/ies are we relating to ourselves? When I am being reflexive about myself, I take myself as an object in particular affective ways: challenging myself, comforting myself, securing myself, opening myself, distancing from myself, managing myself, etc. Bollas (1982) stresses the importance to think about the space where the self relates to itself as an object. He points at how we handle ourselves all the time in everyday tasks with more or less success in giving space to our desires, in managing our anxiety, etc. He relates our way of handling ourselves to how we have been handled in the past. How I relate to myself in writing this piece is relevant to what I produce. For example, I need to hold the frustration and anxiety that a work in progress can produce. Maybe if I am not able to contain the uncomfortable sensation of uncertainty, I might rush up to finish the piece, closing my inquiry to what I already know and feel comfortable with.

I would like to think not only about our ways of relating to ourselves and others but also to theories as an affective engagement. For example, I think that what

different authors mean by reflexivity when they move away from it (Barad, 2003, 2007; Davies, 2014; Gale & Wyatt, 2017; Haraway, 1997; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012b; Lenz Taguchi, 2012) is probably constrained and narrowed down to a very specific notion of reflexivity that assumes transparency and an essentialist thinking. In this, I could think that there might be an affective need to simplifying a popular concept: reflexivity, to be able to reject it and promote a new one: diffraction. We embrace a new concept relating to the concept, to ourselves and to others through it, in affective ways. As Wyatt (2019) narrates:

To say ‘diffraction’ feels an artifice, a pose, a clever play inviting the question “What do you mean, ‘diffraction’?” whereupon I can give the concept a convoluted explanation (convoluted because I don’t feel as if I inhabit it, can’t shuffle into it, like a coat, with familiar ease); and if I’m lucky I sound well-read and intellectual. (p. 146)

Haraway (1997) proposes *diffraction* as an alternative to reflexivity, criticising the latter for only *displacing the same elsewhere* (p. 16). I understand that reflexivity is criticised for reifying what it analyses. But this particular quoted phrase is important; it engages me affectively. If reflexivity only displaces the same elsewhere who am I when I am *still* using it? In the same text, Haraway acknowledges the work of Sandra Harding in critical reflexivity as necessary and closer to her notion of diffraction than to other conceptualisations of reflexivity. Haraway (1997) says about the critical reflexivity of Harding:

Unlike the Latour of Science in Action, she does not mistake the constituted and constitutive practices that generate and reproduce systems of stratified inequality-and that issue in the protean, historically specific, marked bodies of race, sex, and class-for preformed, functionalist categories. (p. 36)

In that sense, Haraway (1997) is stressing how there can be a conceptualisation of reflexivity that does not assume that there is a something already there – for instance the category of race – but that this is a process constantly in-the-making. What is she doing in relational and affective terms? Is she making teams? What is this producing in the academic community?

I want to remark that we can have a more relational and processual understanding and *still* use reflexivity – understood in a particular way.

However, my intention is not to disregard the more essentialist and transparent ways of using reflexivity because I argue that they can also have useful productions.

I think about each reflexivity – that is about each way of relating – as an *apparatus* or *discursive practice* (Barad, 2007) that produces the boundaries that delimit its objects. Each of these conceptual apparatuses enact the agential cuts that produce particular realities and meanings. Of course, my own conceptual apparatus is not out of this; I am offering an apparatus to think about each reflexivity as not right or wrong but more or less useful in particular moments. Following this path, reflexivity is not in itself about capturing correctly what our thoughts/feelings/social and relational positions are. Every time that we refer back to ourselves we are performing an action that has an impact, that has consequences.

For example, if in reviewing my notes for writing about a clinical case, I say: “Actually, I was not able to hear this client in this session; I was imposing on her my own ideas of what a healthy bereavement would be”, I am not only trying to capture what was happening in that session but, in this endeavour, I am also relating to myself in some particular ways and enabling some possibilities. I am assuming a degree of transparency: “I am doing this”, “I was not able do that”. I am not holding a relational understanding of my performance in this moment; it is more essentialist in that I am seeing something that I do as a personal difficulty in my practice. I am relating affectively with myself with certain kindness in the sense that I am giving myself some space of flexibility: I am not saying for example that “I am an imposing therapist”. This reflexivity might yield a sense of myself: “I can impose on my clients” that allows a sense of responsibility over myself, a self-awareness of how imposing I might be and the possibility of hearing more closely how my client might think differently about bereavement. My way of being reflexive also produces the boundaries of what I conceive as ‘my client’ and ‘his bereavement’ as, for instance, something personal that happens ‘inside’ my

client. Furthermore, both my reflexivity in the session and in thinking about it afterwards are not enacted from a position of mastery. Instead, I am part of an intra-action (Barad, 2007) with material/semantic situations. What I consider as 'I' and 'my client', 'bereavement', and so on, emerges through the operation of that apparatus – that is, through that specific way of reflexively relating to myself.

### **Useful reflexivities**

In this ground, I propose thinking of reflexivity as affective ways of relating to oneself that yield, that produce. Here I could be enacting something that I can be critical of: I am saying what reflexivity is or is not, as if believing that I need to discuss which concepts reflect reality more adequately. Saying reflexivity is not representational but productive can just be another contribution to the great amount of academic texts with representational assumptions. Can I get out of this? I believe that I cannot dispense with the notion that in every definition there is a representational flavour. Maybe the only difference is the aim for the definition to be valued in its productions, in its yielding, in its *use* (Winnicott, 1971), in what it moves – or does not.

I propose a way of relating to the different reflexivities and its theoretical underpinnings in which we think about the potentialities and disadvantages of them, instead of embracing one and disregarding other ways. To be clear, I am not proposing to stop criticising conceptualisations of reflexivity, instead I think it is important to be aware of the groundings and critics of each way of understanding reflexivity so that we can *use* them.

As I have developed in my methodology chapter (chapter two), what I mean by the word *use* comes from Winnicott (1971). Commonly, we would associate *use* with a strategic management of the other. However, the word in the Winnicotian sense has almost the opposite connotation: it refers to how I can perceive the other outside my omnipotent control. He underscores that when this happens I am able to *use* the object. I understand this *use* as being able to get what the singularity of the other can offer. Benjamin (1990, 2004) draws

on the Winnicottian concept of *use* for her notion of intersubjectivity. She is positing that when we perceive the other as another – not as someone that is doing something to us: an enemy or an ally – we can *use* them in the Winnicottian sense. Inspired by this, different theories and ways of conceiving reflexivity can be recognised in their otherness – outside a sense of omnipotent understanding that would allow us to discard or fully integrate a particular theory.

### **Reflexivities operating outside our voluntary intention**

I think of the different reflexivities as ways of relating that produce forms of understanding and worldings (Barad, 2007) that can be *useful* in some contexts – by producing these very contexts - and I might employ even if being unaware of it and consciously rejecting them.

For instance, I have argued that I do not want to put one way of being reflexive over the other. However, I see how I tend to give more value to relational and more opaque ways of being reflexive. But this very statement about my valuing opaque and relational reflexivities is made from a more transparent and essentialist reflexivity. It takes the shape of a confession. Inspired by Barad (2007) how I act – for example using a transparent reflexivity – needs to be understood not as an operation from a position of mastery but as an action that is produced in determinate material/semantic intra-actions.

Pillow (2003) acknowledges that we might be reproducing a form of reflexivity that we are outwardly rejecting. She describes four reflexive strategies that act in a confessional fashion; she is critical of them yet acknowledges how: “In identifying these four strategies, I have also been able to find myself and my writing styles in each and see how attached and invested I remain to these ideologies, however much I may think I work against each.” (Pillow, 2003, p. 181)

If we stick to one concept and categorically reject alternative conceptualizations – as it might be to put forward the notion of *diffraction* through a rejection of reflexivity (Barad, 2003, 2007) - we might be enacting

the dichotomous thinking that we actually claim to be rejecting<sup>41</sup>. In psychoanalytical terms, it might be similar to what is called a *paranoid-schizoid* operation where we hold one thing very close to our identity, rejecting or undermining other possibilities. A paranoid schizoid operation is based on *splitting* (separating into incompatible extremes), which works for creating order (Ogden, 1988). Splitting is used to make an order that brings a sense of safety and security – keeping something that is felt to be threatening at bay - but it does not help to complex and deepen a process of comprehension. “Splitting is a boundary-creating mode of thought and therefore a part of an order-generating (not yet a personal meaning-generating) process.” (Ogden, 1986, p. 48). Following from this, it might be that the rejection of reflexivity altogether with the embracing of diffraction helps to create a sense of organisation, but that might be at the expense of losing complexity and nuances. For rejecting strongly something we probably need to reduce it or simplify it. In a Winnicottian sense, we need to negate its otherness that we cannot omnipotently embrace with our minds.

One could think that what I am doing here is to embrace reflexivity through rejecting diffraction, that is that I am doing exactly what I am critical of. Nonetheless, I hope it is clear that the version of reflexivity as affective ways of relating that I develop in this chapter is heavily influenced by Barad’s (2007) conceptualisations - that are related to the notion of diffraction<sup>42</sup>. In that sense, reflexivity understood as affective ways of relating is not made in opposition to diffraction but in collaboration with it. In any case, I do not claim I ‘know’ or control how I am relating to myself, to the concepts and to the readers in this work. For sure, I am enacting – and my writing on its own will be enacting – ways of relating that escape my best intentions.

I am arguing here that reflexivity is an activity that we are engaged in inevitably – we are always relating to ourselves, forming ourselves (Butler, 1997;

---

<sup>41</sup> I delve in this in chapter six: *Betraying our best intentions: using meta-reflexivity with diffraction*.

<sup>42</sup> In the next two chapters I explore the relationship between reflexivity and diffraction.

Deleuze, 2006; Foucault, 1990) and producing a world (Barad, 2007) in that action. This activity, though, is not commanded from a position of mastery. Instead, we find ourselves being reflexive in some ways, even if we claim to reject these ways. Because of this, the threefold questioning device can help to qualify in which ways we are being reflexive at any given moment, without assuming that we already know how we are doing it. But the threefold questioning device will not provide *objective* answers. To be clear: to be reflexive on how we are relating is precisely another way of relating, not an – impossible – neutral operation.

## Conclusions

In this chapter, I have put forward an understanding of reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce. According to this conceptualisation all that there is, is relating. The entities are not essential but products of ways of relating that need to be continuously re-actualised. From this perspective, it does not make sense to think in a correct or incorrect conceptualisation of reflexivity but to think about what the different conceptualisations enable. Taking Barad's (2007) concept, I ask: what worlds the different reflexivities as apparatuses produce?

I have used Barad's argument to think how the different reflexivities might work as apparatuses that produce their subjects and their objects. Whenever we are using a certain reflexivity we are articulating a world. We do this not from a sovereign position but as part of an intra-acting system.

If all what we have is ways of relating that have certain productions - that allow some things and disavow others – then meta-reflexivity needs to be directed towards the questioning of how we are relating, understanding that, crucially, *this exercise of reflexivity is in itself a way of relating that yields certain productions*. And I believe that a potential production of being reflexive about how we are relating to ourselves/others/theory is an inquiry that understands that there are not better or righter conceptualisations in abstract terms but



more useful concepts in certain contexts – because of the very contexts that they produce.

In this chapter I have used Barad's (2007) conceptualisations to make my version of reflexivity that as I have mentioned is not against diffraction. As diffraction is such an important concept to how I have been developing my way of thinking – as it might be apparent in how much I have used it to frame my methodology – it feels imperative to think further about it and how it relates to reflexivity; what it can bring to reflexivity and the other way around. Following from that, in the next two chapters, chapter five and six, I develop the relationship between reflexivity and diffraction. Specifically, in the next chapter, I elaborate on how reflexivity and diffraction are not clearly separated; we never find just reflexivity or just diffraction. I further develop how my conceptualisation of reflexivity is an already diffracted reflexivity and why it is important to blur the clear-cut differentiation of them.

## **Chapter 5: What if reflexivity and diffraction intra-act?**



## Introduction

I try to make sense of myself. I need to make sense of myself. Do I? I make stories about what is happening in my life. I make a narrative. I make another. I 'reflect'<sup>43</sup> about myself. I do not do this from a mastery position; the narratives come from a greater assemblage (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) of all of what is intra-acting (Barad, 2007) (with) me. What is happening in my life? I end up hearing myself telling different people different versions of something like: "Now I am in a transitional stage, moving from the PhD into something other indeterminate yet. I am in the UK, I would like to stay and I need a visa to do so; there is some anxiety". What does this narrative produce? What does this narrative give me? A place for my anxiety? A separation between 'me/us' – the overseas – and 'they' – the Europeans, the British? Is this narrative 'true'? Sometimes I feel very confident about getting what I need: visas, fellowships, work. Is it what is happening that I am in a transition? I can narrate this differently. Another part of me always feels in transitions. What is and is not a

---

<sup>43</sup> Some authors (Aron, 2000; Finlay & Gough, 2003) distinguish between reflection and reflexivity. Aron (2000) understand self-reflection as pointing at a cognitive process where we try to make sense of ourselves as if from the outside; in contrast, self-reflexivity also includes the affective experience of the moment from the first-person perspective. Similarly, Finlay and Gough (2003) think about reflection as after the event while reflexivity is more on the spot and dynamic. Schön (2008) speaks about reflection-in-action which would be closer to the previous notions of reflexivity. These distinctions might find a root in the phenomenological notion of reflection as cognitive and thematised which is opposed to the pre-reflective as embedded in the action and implicit. While I think of these distinctions as useful, I do not follow them as they make assumptions that I trouble. With my conceptualisation of reflexivity as affective ways of relating (chapter four), the temporal distinction that grants a separation between 'in the action' and 'after the action' is challenged. I think that we are always in action, we are always relating to ourselves, there is never a moment of standing back to look at what happened that is not already an action and a way of relating. Furthermore, both these notions rest on an individual performing the reflexivity or reflection whereas I think of the subject as part of a greater milieu and produced by 'their' reflexive activity rather than previous to it. More to the point, I do not think that there is an already formed self to be reflected or reflexive about but that it is in constant process of becoming. Finally, I do not think of reflexivity as requiring conscious awareness but as something that happens involuntarily (we find ourselves being reflexive in particular ways) and so what we can do is to, in a meta-reflexive gesture, bring the attention to how we are relating to ourselves.

Coming back to the distinction between reflexivity and reflection, Haraway (1997) and Barad (2007) think that reflexivity operates like reflection in the sense of trying to mirror something. In this thesis, when I am referring to reflecting I am pointing towards the intention to represent or grasp something that, as I developed in chapters five and six, is not something that we can stop doing.

transition, anyway? “I am in a transition that brings some anxiety”. Is this narrative ‘true’? That might be a senseless question because from where can I answer to that? I try another question: Does this narrative work for accounting of what is happening to me? But these questions are not separated: for this narrative to work, to make use of it, it needs to feel ‘true’. As I developed in the previous chapter, in believing this narrative – in holding it – I produce a context that makes it ‘real’.

Both reflexivity and diffraction help me here. I can be concerned with grasping, with knowing, with articulating what is going on with me. This would be closer to reflexivity, to the idea that I can actually know what is happening to me. “I can know what is going on with me, I just need to reflect about it, or to go to the psychotherapist, or to make a discursive analysis of what social discourses are speaking through me, or maybe to travel, or to do a retreat and get to an insight, an answer: yes, this is what is going on with me”. But if I take seriously a relational ontology, I cannot know. As I see it, all of what I can do is to relate to it in different ways, producing something in this movement. This is my conceptualisation of reflexivity as ways of relating that produces. This idea of reflexivity met with diffraction. This idea of reflexivity became possible and solid after, among many other things, reading about diffraction. But diffraction also wants to take me elsewhere. I read the authors on diffraction and they do not want reflexivity. They want to move on. The posts. They want to leave something behind, to bring the new. I do not like that narrative very much. Progression. Evolution. I think that it can produce – or if I am braver, I think that it produces – practices of exclusion. “I have evolved, have you?” “I use diffraction, do you still use reflexivity?”

Reflexivity has been criticised and even encouraged to move away from (Barad, 2003, 2007; Davies, 2014; Gale & Wyatt, 2017; Haraway, 1997; Lenz Taguchi, 2012) because of its alleged reliance on representationalism and its aim to identify and categorise the self, leaving little space for difference and processes of becoming and production. I think that this critique is very

generative and I make extensive use of it. Nonetheless, I also think that this argument might fall prey to some of what it criticises in identifying and reducing reflexivity to one reified thing. An operation like: reflexivity is x and y and that is why we should move on from it.

I think that this can be similar to what Sedgwick (2003) calls *paranoid reading*. She suggests that this way of reading is pervasive in critical approaches to the point that the very word 'critical' is reduced to name this practice that insists in suspecting the texts, looking to find in them what is dreaded, reducing their complexity and foreclosing alternative paths. Building from this, Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) contribute to the debate between reflexivity and diffraction trying to stay with the complexity of both practices and not to make a paranoid and binary reading that assumes diffraction as the superior term.

Looking at some of the literature (Bondi, 2009; Brown, 2006; Campbell, 2004; Davies et al., 2004; Etherington, 2004, 2017; Finlay, 2002, 2017; Gemignani, 2017; Pillow, 2003, 2015; G. Rose, 1997; Shaw, 2016; Wilkinson, 1988), reflexivity has been conceptualised in numerous ways and it is constantly re-thought; therefore, it does not sit comfortably with one overarching definition of it that can help us to absolutely reject it. As with Winnicott (1971) I want to *use* the authors, which as I have said is the contrary to the traditional meaning of use as an utilitarian way of relating. To use in the Winnicottian sense refers to the way of relating where I assume that the other is not under my omnipotent control; hence, they get placed outside my psychic world, and this externality makes me able to use them. I can only use what I cannot completely control. I want to use reflexivity and to use diffraction, not to dominate them, not to omnipotently discard any of them as useless.

In this chapter, I argue that I need both: reflexivity and diffraction. Furthermore, I contend that reflexivity and diffraction are blurred into each other like a diffraction pattern of light; we move from reflexivity to diffraction and back not in a definite manner. I do not find spaces where there is just reflexivity or just diffraction like a diffraction pattern where there are no absolutes just darker

and lighter zones and you cannot pinpoint where exactly the shift occurred. Reflexivity and diffraction are not external to each other; I think they blur into each other. What if reflexivity and diffraction intra-act?

Throughout the text, I affirm that a focus on the *use* and *productivity* of each concept and practice can generate a more open stance towards other ways of *making sense* and *making world*, thus contributing to spaces of further complexities, nuances and multiplicities.

The rejection of reflexivity in favour of diffraction reproduces what it criticises, and I think that, precisely, this is an example of how diffraction shifts into reflexivity as reflection. We want diffraction but we also want to know that diffraction is the best and that prevent us from being coherent with diffraction. At the same time, there is a transforming and diffracting capacity in reflexivity. Following Derrida (1978), the gesture of reflecting back to oneself or of turning over oneself or one's work there is always going to be some degree of difference produced. I argue, then, that the differentiation between reflexivity and diffraction is not absolute or clear-cut.

With diffraction I need to think about how I am constantly becoming through intra-actions (Barad, 2007). Intra-action affirms that we do not interact with other things as if we were separate and already formed; we intra-act, the boundaries that define the agencies at play are always in process of being constituted. Diffraction points at the movements through which I constantly become otherwise in a way that the 'I', the identity, is lost in the intra-action. I think about movements and things getting re-shaped constantly. I resonate enthusiastically with the possibilities that this gives, the openness that brings. But I still say 'I', and I still need to make sense of what is happening and of who I am being. My wanting to grasp myself, to grasp the other, to know, "ah this is how it is". I need it but then when I do it I can feel trapped, the other can feel trapped. If I feel how I become with, feeling the continuous process, and how my doings are produced by something wider than me and that my doings make also what there is, and then, I can feel more space. However, I can also

feel more lost, and I need to ask again: “but, how is it? What am I/are you ‘really’ feeling?” “What is this all about?” What I find is never purely diffraction or purely reflexivity, in some indeterminate moment it shifts and then again. The diffraction pattern with its zones of light in dark and darkness in the light: blurred, not clear-cut.

I do not think that I need to reject reflexivity and become diffractive. I do not think that I need to move away from this search that asks: What is happening? Who am I being in this situation? What do I feel about this? I do not need to stop asking these questions. I think, though, that I can ask these questions differently, playing with them. I think I need to open myself to making sense of myself through diffraction without needing to reject reflexivity. I think of a diffracted reflexivity. A reflexivity, as I am developing it, that holds a thoroughly relational ontology and from there says that reflexivity is understood as ways of relating to oneself, ways of relating that produce this very self and a world in that movement of making sense.

This chapter is my way of articulating reflexivity and diffraction, their connections and how they fade into each other: a diffraction pattern. I attempt to put reflexivity and diffraction together, intra-acting (with) each other to embrace my diffracted reflexivity. First, I define both, reflexivity and diffraction, in depth. After this, I put forward my conceptualisation of reflexivity that uses diffraction. I make use of my reflexivity *as affective ways of relating to ourselves* to blur the clear-cut differentiation of reflexivity and diffraction and I finish by concluding why I consider so relevant to challenge this sharp differentiation between the concepts. At different points, I bring my engagement with psychotherapy.

## **Reflexivity**

In this section I speak about reflexivity in the social sciences. Reflexivity in the social sciences speaks to how the knowledge produced is not neutral but comes from a subjectivity. This subjectivity can be understood as bounded, socially situated, spoken through social discourses, etc. When I was speaking



of reflexivity earlier I was doing so in more general terms, as the practices of making sense of myself. Reflexivity in the social sciences needs this, the author needs to make sense of themselves in some way to think about how they shape their work. We can make sense of ourselves in very different ways. Not one reflexivity but reflexivities.

That reflexivity is not unitary but that there are different types of reflexivity has been highlighted by different authors (Dcruz, Gillingham, & Melendez, 2007; Denzin, 1997; Finlay, 2002, 2003, 2017; Gemignani, 2017; Kuehner, Ploder, & Langer, 2016; Pillow, 2003, 2015; Wilkinson, 1988). In general, there is a differentiation between a more personal reflexivity, with humanistic underpinnings and a more social reflexivity that understand the subject as socially constituted and asks to be reflexive about the discursive practices and institutional workings that impact our research and work.

A more personal reflexivity in the social sciences (Etherington, 2017; Finlay, 1998, 2008; Georgiadou, 2016) argues for the personal location of the author as directly relevant to the research process and outcomes. Within psychotherapy, Stolorow and Atwood (1979), make an early study on how the theories in psychotherapy and psychoanalysis derive from the personal concerns and lives of their authors. Some authors propose the usefulness of psychoanalysis to research and to think about reflexivity (Aron, 2000; Bondi, 2014; Brown, 2006; Finlay, 2009; Holmes, 2013; Lapping, 2016). In psychoanalysis, the notion of countertransference has a place similar to reflexivity because countertransference speaks to how the personal involvement of the analyst is present in their work with patients.

Wilkinson (1988) from feminism, made a ground-breaking contribution in this regard and she is widely acknowledged as an influence in the conceptualisation of reflexivity. She distinguishes between personal, functional and disciplinary reflexivity. The first two are at a more personal level, they deal with how our particularities as a person influences what one studies and the way in which one does this. Whereas the disciplinary reflexivity is concerned

with how the discipline works and how that affects the research productions of it. For example, it interrogates what kinds of knowledge and ways of researching are validated, which ones are excluded and what are the consequences of that.

Continuing with an emphasis on a more social reflexivity, Harding (1993), also coming from feminism, influentially argues for a *strong reflexivity* where the researcher reflects about their social position, personal life and perspectives not for trying to achieve more neutrality but to embrace a scholarship that stems from – and possibly transforms – a socially situated subject. She proposes a new notion of objectivity called *strong objectivity* that rejects the possibility of neutrality and puts forward that the way to achieve objectivity is not eschewing the social positionality of the researcher but on the contrary to make explicit from where this knowledge is produced.

The social studies of science posit that there is not a neutrality or possible objectivity in the scientific practices; instead, making science is a rhetorical practice of representation (Lynch & Woolgar, 1990; Woolgar, 1993). That is why Woolgar (1993) proposes to focus the attention on reflexivity, that is, on the practices of representation. The argument is that if we can study and show our practices of representation we can produce a better account of our research. What we say in our studies does not need to be taken as face value, but our readers need to see how this knowledge is produced.

Latour (1988) criticises Woolgar (1988) for implying, against his own relativism, that there can be a truer account by increasing reflexivity, that is, for exercising a meta-reflexivity. He argues:

Why can't they be ordered in a pile of reflexive layers? Because they are all texts or stories bearing on something else. There is no way to order texts in layers because they are all equal. Texts, so to speak, live in a democracy, as far as semiotics is concerned. The whole vertigo of self-reference stems from the very naive belief that the same actor appears in both the first (down below) and last text (up there). (Latour, 1988, p. 169)

I agree with the criticism that Latour puts forward. That is why my meta-reflexivity does not claim to generate objective or more objective knowledge but to be just another way of relating; however, this way of relating has the specificity of generating awareness and a responsibility over how our ways of relating are producing ourselves and our world. Latour's (1988) way of resolving the problem that he finds in Woolgar's (1988) argument is different. Instead of the meta-reflexivity that Woolgar proposes, Latour (1988) argues to put the effort in generating *better* in the sense of *more persuasive* fictions. Haraway (1997) joins Latour in the critique of Woolgar's use of reflexivity. She highlights that Woolgar focus the spotlight on the researcher but does not do much to produce a change in the world. Nonetheless, according to Campbell (2004), Haraway is not convinced by the idea of making *more persuasive* fictions because for feminism knowledge is political and in that sense a kind of accuracy is required to produce criticism and change. The inequalities need to be taken seriously.

Haraway, situating her proposal between feminism and constructivism (Campbell, 2004), proposes the concept of *situated knowledges* (Haraway, 1988), that highlights that knowledge is always produced locally by socially situated actors. She says that acknowledging this produces better accounts – more objective accounts – than the ones that assume that their knowledge is neutral as if produced from a God's-eye-view.

Continuing with the reflexivities that take into account the social and cultural dimensions, I think about more *discursive* reflexivities that are drawing on poststructuralist thought that conceptualises subjectivity as socially constituted. This type of reflexivity does not look at the person as the foundation of knowledge; in contrast, the subject is spoken through dominant discourses and this is the focus of attention.

Reflexivity implies a critical consciousness of the discourses that hold us in place, that is, a capacity to distance ourselves from them at the same time as we are constituted by them, a capacity to see the work they do and to question their effects at the same time as we live those

effects. This does not mean that one is outside of language or floating free of discourse. It means rather, that the possibility exists of reflexively turning the gaze of language on itself. (Davies et al., 2004, p. 380)

Gemignani (2017) also works towards a critical reflexivity that asks genealogic questions instead of humanistic and representationalistic ones. Pillow (2003, 2015) goes in that direction as well proposing to think about an *uncomfortable reflexivity* and reflexivity as *genealogical*. I believe that to move the attention to discourse is an important practice to be able to make social criticisms and in that way to make space to think and act differently. (Foucault, 1990)

Nonetheless, sometimes these efforts seem, at one time, to acknowledge the limitations of subjectivity – in that the person loses its mastery by the overpowering social discourses – and to give the masterfulness back – in believing that we can catch ourselves and see how discourses are working in us, escaping their hold. As Lather says: “To attempt to deconstruct one's own work is to risk buying into the faith in the powers of critical reflection that places emancipatory efforts in such a contradictory position with the poststructuralist foregrounding of the limits of consciousness.” (Lather, 1993, p. 685)

In that sense, reflexivity has been criticised for trying to grasp, to represent, the subjective and/or socially situated position of a subject as if this representation could actually be done. In other words, reflexivity has been criticised for assuming that we – as ‘observers’ – can be somehow separated from what is observed and from that distinction we can actually figure it out how we are involved in our endeavours. As I was saying earlier, with reflexivity I have the expectation that I can know what is going on with myself.

### **Diffraction by Haraway**

Campbell (2004) explains how Haraway moves from reflexivity to diffraction, together with moving from representation to articulation. “The concept of ‘diffraction’ relies not on a model of representation but of ‘articulation’” (Campbell, 2004, p. 174). This distinction points that is not a subject representing an object, with the duality that this implies. Instead, it is about subjects in relation, different subjects articulating among each other.

Haraway (1992) puts forward that the practices of representation are authorising the person 'the expert' that makes the representation, leaving the object powerless. "Tutelage will be eternal. The represented is reduced to the permanent status of the recipient of action, never to be a co-actor in an articulated practice among unlike, but joined, social partners". (Haraway, 1992, p. 312). As I understand it, articulation is a more democratic, non-hierarchical way of relating to the world, where we think about movements together and what they produce instead of representing. Not saying what is going on with me/you/it as if I had the power to define and to name me/you/it; to articulate together, not to represent me/you/it, to articulate in between.

Importantly, Haraway (1992) assumes that the boundaries that define each subject are not previously set. Then, it is not about an 'expert' representing a reality out there – or their own selves, I would add – as if these two categories were pre-set. Likewise, in her model of articulation, it is not that already formed things interact with each other but they get shaped in the articulation. "But the things, in my view, do not pre-exist as ever-elusive, but fully pre-packaged, referents for the names. Other actors are more like tricksters than that. Boundaries take provisional, never finished shape in articulatory practices." (Haraway, 1992, p. 313)

It is in this way that Haraway moves away from reflexivity in its association with representationalism and status quo. "Diffraction engages with the different possible patterns that interactions with others create. For Haraway, the 'interference patterns' of diffraction can shift existing meanings" (Campbell, 2004, p. 174). In that way, Haraway moves to diffraction in an effort for making a critical practice that changes something in the world. "These diffracting rays compose *interference* patterns, not reflecting images." (Haraway, 1992, p. 299)

Reflexivity has been much recommended as a critical practice, but my suspicion is that reflexivity, like reflection, only displaces the same elsewhere, setting up the worries about copy and original and the search for the authentic and really real. Reflexivity is a bad trope for escaping the false choice between realism and relativism in thinking about strong objectivity and situated knowledges in technoscientific

knowledge. What we need is to make a difference in material- semiotic apparatuses, to diffract the rays of technoscience so that we get more promising interference patterns on the recording films of our lives and bodies. Diffraction is an optical metaphor for the effort to make a difference in the world. (Haraway, 1997, p. 16)

I think it is interesting to think about this in relation to psychotherapeutic practice. To me it amounts to more relational theorisations of psychoanalysis where the practices of understanding are not aimed at capturing what the client is – not to make a descriptive diagnosis of them. Instead, our understanding, our interpretations, are relational moves: they come from and produce different ways of relating. In a similar vein to Winnicott (1990)<sup>44</sup>, I would state that the value of an interpretation is not because of its correctness, but in its potentiality to keep playing. Therapy is about finding ways of relating – or, in Haraway's terms, ways of *articulating* - that bring novelty. I believe that this way of conceiving therapy does more for providing a platform where both client and therapist can become otherwise and not get frozen in pre-set roles and scripts.

Precisely, for Haraway (1992), a possible effect of diffraction is Trinh's *inappropriate/d others*. Inappropriated not as being outside of relation as in a natural or original status, but to be enacting a way of relating beyond domination; not being constrained to a taxonomy. Maybe in psychotherapy it can be easy to fall prey to practices of appropriating and constraining our clients to different taxonomies, even if these taxonomies are more 'benign' than a psychiatric diagnosis – as it can be that the person has difficulties tolerating uncertainty or that they are starting a process of self-actualisation. Even in these cases, there can be something of grasping and maybe trapping the other in a category. It might be that it is calming for us as psychotherapists – and to the clients that might feel recognised and reassured – to 'know' what is going on, to 'know' who is the person that we have in front of us, and to 'know' what we are striving for in our process with them, but it might also

---

<sup>44</sup> The year of the original publication is 1962.

reproduce a *colonising* way of relating, in that we impose onto them our values and categories.

### **Diffraction by Barad**

Barad (2007) drawing on Haraway's insights also works with the notion of diffraction in an explicit contrast and rejection of reflexivity. She also starts from a criticism of representationalism as a basis for reflexivity. Representationalism assumes that language can mirror reality and it is argued that reflexive methodologies just place the mirror in front of the researcher. Barad's work criticises reflexivity that even in putting the knower back in the picture, it does it as if it was a matter of accepting that we are knowing from a certain perspective. Diffraction does not only point to the fact that we are situated (as if the world was fixed) but that we are becoming with the world.

Diffraction speaks to me in therapy of suspending the need, or eschewing the need, for a diagnosis or a definite characterisation of our own involvement or of any interaction – as if we could stand at a distance and 'know' what something 'is'. It speaks about intervening from within, producing something as if blindly. We do not know from afar, we are part of it, continuously becoming with it. Because we are constantly in a process – always in movement – there are not fixed entities that we can categorise. This is not news for many psychotherapists. Bion (1970) has been very strong in the need for not foreclosing thought through clear definitions and to operate driven by something felt that cannot be articulated. In this, Bion was pointing at being part of a field that cannot be known but we are unavoidably part of it.

Through trying to understand something we are becoming with it, producing something out of that particular *articulation* (Haraway, 1992). As Barad (2007) makes clear, diffraction is about understanding ourselves as continuously defined by, and defining, the world that we are 'studying'.

The point is not simply to put the observer or knower back *in* the world (as if the world were a container and we needed merely to acknowledge our situatedness in it) but to understand and take account of the fact that we too are part of the world's differential becoming. And

furthermore, the point is not merely that knowledge practices have material consequences but that *practices of knowing are specific material engagements that participate in (re)configuring the world*. Which practices we enact matter –in both senses of the word. Making knowledge is not simply about making facts but about making worlds, or rather, it is about making specific worldly configurations – not in the sense of making them ex nihilo, or out of language, beliefs, or ideas, but in the sense of materially engaging as part of the world in giving it specific material form. (Barad, 2007, p. 91)

I do not think that this compelling conceptualisation is very far from a relational understanding in psychoanalysis where it is not (only) about knowing what the patient ‘is’, or what dynamics are present but about what ways of relating are present between patient and psychotherapist, and how they are moving the patient (and also the psychotherapist) to more or less enabling ways of relating and being. I think that from a relational perspective, we are not seeing, for example, a ‘narcissistic’ client; we are enacting a narcissistic way of relating between us: we are making narcissism appear. (Serra Undurraga, 2016)

In theoretical scholarship, diffraction inspires to not place attention into grasping what an author really meant – as if we could represent this knowledge – but to put our efforts into thinking what different ideas *do*. Jackson and Mazzei (2012b), for example, see where different concepts can take them.

I consider the concept of diffraction generative and important. Nonetheless, I struggle with the categorical rejection of reflexivity. I believe that there is not a clear-cut difference between these concepts and furthermore that they are useful to each other. In what follows, I develop my understanding and use of reflexivity (that uses diffraction) to then argue how both concepts are not as sharply differentiated. Finally, I reflect on the usefulness of blurring this clear-cut separation.



## **My understanding and use of reflexivity<sup>45</sup>**

From a relational ontology, reflexivity is no longer attractive as it assumes from the start a separation between the observer and the observed. In stating that we need to see how we are present in our research it is assumed that we are separated from it and that we can know and state our position as if it was something to be observed at a distance. Diffraction, instead, does not put the focus on knowing and stating our position, but on the processes through which the identities and agencies are constantly made and re-made. Diffraction does not think of any methodology as neutral and able to represent the world; but as producing the boundaries of what will be taken as the world, the author, the participant, etc. to be analysed.

First of all, as it is suggested, reflexivity starts off with preconceived assumptions of binaries rather than investigating how boundaries or binaries are produced through the methodology itself. In reflexivity, there is a researcher as an independent subject who is actually the locus of reflection, whereas in diffraction there is no such distinction as subjects and objects are always already entangled. Thus, from a diffractive perspective, subjects and objects such as nature and culture are not fixed referents for understanding the other but should be read through one another as entanglements. (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 116)

My notion of reflexivity takes into account this criticism and it is not worried about stating my position for example saying that I am a woman, that I am Chilean, that I do not have children, that I am a psychotherapist, etc. as if these identity categories 'represent' me or could directly say something about the work that I write. Nonetheless, I believe that if I were doing that, I would be reflexively relating to myself in certain ways. Maybe if I were defining myself like that I would be relating to myself as if I could actually be grasped and pinned down in a set of categories. Crucially, I think that this reflexive way of relating to myself would be producing – making the agential cut that

---

<sup>45</sup> As you, my reader, are well aware I started this reconceptualisation in the previous chapter. However, this repetition, this coming back to it, as with reflexivity, works to further elaborate my proposition.

momentarily defines – that self. Therefore, I would be producing something rather than confessing something.

My understanding and use of reflexivity comes from the notion that we are always inevitably reflexive about ourselves. According to a Foucauldian understanding (Butler, 1997b; Deleuze, 2006; Foucault, 1990) we produce ourselves in a process of folding in social discourses: we reflexively relate to ourselves according to the norms that we breathe and in this endeavour, we form ourselves. In a relational and psychoanalytic reading (Bruschweiler-Stern et al., 2002; Fairbairn, 1952; Mitchell, 2000; Mitchell & Aron, 2013; Ogden, 1986; D. N. Stern, 2000), our subjectivity can only be understood as emerging from previous and current relationships that continuously shape available ways of relating to others and to oneself. Reflexivity in this panorama, is a way of relating to ourselves that is continuously producing the very self that we take ourselves to be.

We are always aware of ourselves in certain ways (socially and relationally enabled), we are always unintentionally reflexive about ourselves. A more intentional reflexivity is invited not only from poststructuralism, as to see how discourse is operating, but also from, for example, relational psychotherapeutic theories that make us prone to think about what ways of relating to ourselves and to others we are enacting. As I have said, the practice of the self that I am inviting is a kind of meta-reflexivity that interrogates the ways in which we are relating to ourselves – the ways in which we are being reflexive. I think that the interrogation of the ways in which we are relating to ourselves is benefited from what I call the threefold questioning device that provides a set of questions to qualify how we are relating to ourselves, how we are being reflexive about ourselves. This device asks how we are conceiving ourselves (as a unit self, in relational-intersubjective terms, in intra-active terms...), how transparent or opaque we are assuming our access to ourselves to be and how we are affectively engaging with ourselves.

Therefore, my vision of reflexivity assumes that we are always reflexive about ourselves, because we are always relating to ourselves in certain ways (socially, relationally and materially given) and in this action producing ourselves – not from a mastery position but as part of the intra-action (Barad, 2007). My conceptualisation of reflexivity invites the meta-reflexive practice of bringing the attention to question the ways in which we are currently relating to ourselves – the ways in which we are reflexive – understanding that this questioning is also a way of relating to ourselves.

In this understanding, reflexivity as a declaration of from where we are coming from is a way of relating to ourselves where, using the threefolded questioning device, we are assuming that our subjectivity is bounded, that we can have a more transparent access to ourselves and in this endeavour, we might have an affective tonality of security and calmness in knowing ourselves. This way of relating does not discover a bounded and transparently knowable subject but produces it.

I believe that a constant interrogation of the ways in which we are relating to ourselves and to others and what is that producing is necessary and generative. Many times, we assume that we hold certain relationship to ourselves where for example we assume subjectivity to be intra-active and not essentialist, nonetheless, unwittingly, we enact other ways of relating to ourselves (as I develop in the next chapter).

Does the answer to the question of how we are relating to ourselves needs to entail to put ourselves in representational boxes? I think that if we understand reflexivity as a way of relating to ourselves that produces, then being meta-reflexive is not about categorising and labelling in essentialist ways but of giving a reading of what is happening in certain interactions and this very reading moves things in certain ways. To be clear, I do not think that this reading is made from a neutral place but it is part of the entanglement that we breathe through and contributes to further modify – diffract – the very entanglement we are part of.

Bozalek and Murriss (2019) argue that a diffractive reading does not produce absolutisms where one theory that is seen as a unity is qualified as superior or inferior to the other. “The superposition created by the diffraction is not ‘critical’, but adds force to ‘both’, without assuming that either is a unity, nor the interference pattern that has been traced.” (Murriss & Bozalek, 2019, pp. 880-881)

After having further delineated my way of conceiving reflexivity – which is not at odds with diffraction but entangled with it – I develop how the concepts of reflexivity and diffraction are more blurred than what it might appear. They form a diffraction pattern where reflexivity, as wanting to grasp ourselves, blurs into diffraction and the other way around: there is reflexivity in diffraction and diffraction in reflexivity and not a blunt categorisation of either reflexivity or diffraction. Importantly, for making this analysis about how blurred these concepts are, I am heavily relying in my version of meta-reflexivity that asks what ways of relating are enacted and what are they producing. That is, I am not asking: Is this reflexivity or is this diffraction? But, what ways of relating are present here and what they are producing?

### **Blurring**

Arguably, at least some forms of reflexivity (Davies et al., 2004; Gemignani, 2017; Pillow, 2003, 2015; G. Rose, 1997) argue that knowledge cannot be neutral and so that it affects what is ‘represented’. Maybe in these cases the difference between reflexivity and diffraction is not so drastic.

Pillow (2015) thinks about two broad kinds of reflexivity; one understood as interpretation and the other as genealogy. Importantly, she points that a crucial way to differentiate them is to wonder what purpose or usage we are wanting to get through the use of them. While reflexivity as interpretation attempts to reveal the workings of power and to facilitate transformation and more fairness, reflexivity as genealogical is more thoroughly critical of everything, including reflexivity itself; not believing that there is something to discover. Thus, aiming to disrupt any certainty. Pillow (2015) argues that diffraction could be

understood within *reflexivity as genealogy*. She does not produce a dichotomy naming one reflexivity as better suited than the other, but calls to think about the *uses* of it. Pillow drawing on Ferguson (1991 as cited in Pillow 2015) and Sedgwick (2003) argues for not reading a concept against the other but to see how they work, how they need each other.

I think that the work of Pillow (2015) towards emphasising the *what for?* of our concepts and practices is relieving and useful. I believe that this way of relating to the concepts and to other research makes space for broadening thought and for opening space for other ways *of making sense* and – using Barad's (2007) terminology – *making world*. It is in this sense that the work of Barad (2007) in explicitly criticising reflexivity as the opposite of diffraction – positing a dualism where diffraction comes out victor and the reflexivity loser – seems to me as a way of relating that is generating practices of exclusion and policing. I believe that it can produce a worry with identifying and clearly distinguishing what is reflexive and what is diffractive and to be sure to be *in* the better group.

In a way, just now I am doing a similar practice to what I am criticising through opposing the work of Pillow to the work of Barad. But I do not reduce Barad's complex and useful conceptualisations to what I name as the dichotomising operation of affirming diffraction through the rejection of reflexivity; in fact, I use part of her theorisations to criticise this either-or move of eschewing reflexivity. I believe that this dichotomising is reproducing a way of relating through exclusion that I associate with less emphasis in the nuances and intricacy of a theory or a concept. I believe that an attention and honouring of the complexity of a concept would account for differences with other concepts that are emergent and tentative – rather than categorical. Barad (2007) speak about *difference within* instead of foundational differences but her way of separating reflexivity and diffraction speaks to me precisely of what she is criticising. Her *way of relating* to the concept of reflexivity has a more absolutist tone to it.

Barad (2007) argues that diffraction is not to look back at ourselves to try to define what there is there because that would be representationalistic and diffraction moves away from it. Here there seems to be a neatness that makes me uncomfortable. I wonder what if we understand this reflexive look back at ourselves as an action through which we are also performing something else, different than representing. What if there is movement in reflexivity? I believe that the practice of referring back to ourselves again and again, also brings the possibility of difference and movement. We are relating to ourselves in different ways not grasping ourselves in a definite representation.

In the previous paragraph, I follow Barad (2007) in relating to the concept of representation as something to be avoided. Nonetheless, I think that in Barad (2007) the difference between representationalism and performativity – in the sense of making a difference that produces something – looks quite sharp (too sharp). The figure is formed as the need to move away from reflexivity and representationalism, but, as I will argue here, representing is not something that we can cease doing.

I suggest complicating the boundaries between representationalism and performativity. I think that we can never stop representing even when theorising and practicing performativity. Barad (2007) says, using Foucault, that representationalism is characterised by the belief that the represented is independent from the practices of representing<sup>46</sup>. I think that not buying into representationalism is indifferent to the constant need of representing. A different thing is that in the representations that we make we do not assume that we are grasping something external in a definite and accurate way. Instead, I understand that in representing we are making sense of something in particular ways – that could be otherwise – and producing ourselves and the world in this operation.

---

<sup>46</sup> This is interesting because it is precisely through a critique to this belief that reflexivity is called forth: to think about how we are representing and how this affects what we represent.

Every time that we develop an argument we are attempting to represent something; Even the argument: ‘the practice of representing assumes an individuality previous to the *describing* of it’, is a representation. Every time we assert something we need to use a representation in the sense that we say: ‘x *is* in y way’. Furthermore, in eschewing reflexivity the representation is done without including the ways in which (we believe) our ways of relating to the concept are shaping it in certain ways. The argument takes the form of “this is what representation does/assumes” as if we were precisely describing (representing) what representation is – even when we are arguing against representing. And would it be possible to assert something without representing? When I am thinking about diffraction, am I not also representing it?

My own language here, when I write of rendering a prefiguring and exemplifying, exploits the resources of representation in order to discuss what I claim is antirepresentational. But to take a stand against representation is not in fact to escape it. (Arac, 1986, p. xxii)

Furthermore, I emphasise that representing is itself a doing, it is an action that produces. Then the sharp differentiation between representing and performativity is complicated. When we attempt to represent – and we do this unavoidably – we are doing something and thus we are producing something.

Wyatt (2019) writes about a diffractive therapy. He underscores that what we mean and what we do when we are ‘reflecting’ is not captured by the term reflection or reflexivity. Even when we concretely look at ourselves in the mirror, the mirror is not neutral, it does not give us a straightforward ‘reflection’; what we see there is in an entanglement with our state, the weather, the light, etc. Wyatt stresses that when we work with clients, when we go to supervision, when we think about clients, etc. what we do is far more intricate and complex than to analyse situations as if we could hold them at a distance and know about them. We are entangled in the situation in the human and non-human intra-action and we become with it.

I stay with the image of looking at oneself in the mirror. I do not think that what I see in the mirror is neutral; I am aware of the material, relational and affective entanglements. Is it then that I should say diffraction instead of reflection? What I see in the mirror is permeated, yes, *but I keep on looking at the mirror to see how I look as if the mirror can show me this*, as if it can provide me an answer to the question: how do I look? And it is this reflexive question what takes me elsewhere. That is why I speak of reflection or reflexivity and diffraction and all the spaces in-between them; all what is not absolutely diffraction nor absolutely reflection. The diffraction pattern of reflexivity and diffraction flowing into each other with no accurate beginnings or endings.

Lenz Taguchi (2012) proposes to become with the data in a transcorporeal (a concept that troubles the notion of a bounded body) way, being attentive to felt, sensorial data.

This process of transcorporeal engagements, involving other bodily faculties than the mind, constitutes a rethinking of the very act of thinking that goes beyond the idea of reflexivity and interpretation as inner mental activities in the separate mind of the researcher. (Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 267)

I think what is described here can be also understood as another kind of reflexivity, another way of relating to 'myself', where the researcher can be in touch with sensations and feelings that are vague and nuanced. The researcher themselves become affectively taken and transformed with the data; there is not a position of exteriority in relation to the data. I believe that the work of some psychotherapists (Bion, 1970; Bollas, 1987; Gendlin, 1968; Ogden, 1997) speak precisely to a way of becoming aware of 'ourselves' embracing what is felt but not understood in a rational and clear-cut manner. In this endeavour, the vague sensations, images, feelings, etc. that the therapist can have are not conceived as personal but as a product of the field that the therapist is inhabiting.

A difference between this psychotherapeutic understanding and a diffractive intra-active methodology is that in the psychotherapeutic theories more



relevance is given to the human relationships and the material aspects are in a second place or neglected. Nonetheless, psychodrama (Bustos, 1975; Moreno, 1955, 1972, 1995; Reyes, 2005), does further work with giving equal relevance to the material. In the practice of psychodrama, the space, the objects, the temperature, the light, etc. are all integral parts of what is going on in any scene. My point is that the reflexive is also already diffractive and the diffractive reflexive; they are not external to each other, they are not either reflexivity or diffraction as absolutes.

Another important aspect of a diffractive analysis is that the data also has a force. “In the event that emerges, the data is itself understood as a co-constitutive force, working with and upon the researcher, as the researcher is working with the data” (Lenz Taguchi, 2012, p. 272). I resonate with this in how I feel that I concomitantly make my work, my work makes me and my work makes itself in me. This amounts to how we are affected and transformed by our work; in my case by my research and by my clients. Some psychotherapists (Aron, 2006; Bass, 2015; Bromberg, 2000; Levenson, 1993; Shomron-Atar, 2018) – that, explicitly or implicitly, hold reflexivity as a fundamental aspect of psychotherapy – underline how we become otherwise, how we are transformed by our work with clients. I relate this to what I see as a movement in psychotherapy that resonates with diffraction. This movement is from conceiving epistemology and ontology as separated to understanding them entangled: There is not an emphasis in knowing as if we could stand outside our ‘object of study’, but of being with, becoming with. What we can know through being in relation rather than knowing or interpreting as if separated from what we are interested in. However, with this emphasis in becoming, there is also an emphasis in reflexivity; in questioning and being aware of what is happening now, who we are being for the client, what ways of relating are present, what is difficult to process, and so on.

Bozalek and Zembylas (2017), write about their use of two methodologies one diffractive and the other with reflexive journal entries. They say that the latter

required an individual perspective as if being able to see at a distance, whereas the diffractive methodology makes them understand that they are entangled with everything else and that it is this entanglement – and not the individual – which has the constitutive force to create the inquiry. The authors do not make a sharp separation between both ways of inquiry. In fact, they highlight how the reflective journal entries can become diffractive, when attending to the entanglements of which they are part. I would like to add to this insight that the diffractive methodology also becomes reflexive. For instance, I notice that the statements that they make of the diffractive methodology – e.g. that they realised that they were not apart from the material and relational entanglements – can be in themselves a reflexive journal entry. Therefore, I underscore how diffraction can also become reflexive. How reflexivity and diffraction are entangled with each other.

### **Conclusion: Why blur the sharp division between reflexivity and diffraction?**

In this chapter, I have showed how diffraction has emerged through explicitly rejecting and moving away from reflexivity. The main aim of this writing has been to challenge this dichotomising operation and instead to propose a focus on how the concepts work – what they produce – including what they can do to each other. After exploring both, reflexivity and diffraction, I have argued how their differences are not as clear-cut. Moreover, I put forward that sharply differentiating them produces practices of exclusion and policing that aim to check or to prove if you are or not in the ‘better’ group. I contend that both reflexivity and diffraction have something of each other and that actually putting them into conversation can bring about generative yieldings. I emphasise how there is a need for both reflexivity and diffraction: we keep on needing to ask what is going on with ourselves and also needing to escape a fixed and trapping grasping of ourselves. Hence, a diffracted reflexivity and a reflexive diffraction can be useful.

Why am I so invested in complicating the definite separation between reflexivity and diffraction? I think because I connect the *purity* of a concept with a moral affirmation of something through an absolute rejection of something else. Moral superiority: “I am not like them. I am not like you. I do not do this. I am better than that” I think that if we could see ‘in’ ourselves (and in our favourite theories) more of that which we reject in others (or in our most criticised theories), there would be more possibilities for connection and for taking responsibility from a more generous place.

I started the previous paragraph with a reflexive question – *Why am I so invested in complicating the definite separation between reflexivity and diffraction?* – and it helped me to move something. I do not think that my answer exhausted the question, or that the question is what I need to measure myself against. But I do think that the reflexive question made me able to articulate something in a particular way: *to make sense and to make world*.

Furthermore, I am very interested in troubling this sharp division because I want to foreground the inevitable possibility of slippage to different positions, more when we are rejecting one of them strongly. My way of using meta-reflexivity as asking what ways of relating are being enacted now, helps me to make this critique. Psychoanalysis helps me here through thinking about the paranoid-schizoid mechanisms (Ogden, 1988) where what needs to be strongly rejected is clearly taking a hold on us at the same time. Paradoxically, poststructuralism and posthumanism help us to decentre the human but at the same time there is an unwittingly and inevitable movement of re-centring of the mastery of the human as I explore in the next chapter.

I feel more trustful and hopeful towards conceptualisations that do not aspire to this *purity*, that acknowledge and embrace the fact that they also enact what they reject. *They reflexively relate to themselves allowing their incoherencies*. Pillow (2003) stresses how she finds herself also caught in what she criticises even if she tries to avoid it. Davies et. al. (2004) highlight the ambivalences in trying to practice reflexivity while having a discursive understanding “And when

they do manage to resist those habits and sedimentations, to make the constitutive force of discourse visible, and revisable, they will nonetheless find themselves caught in multiple layers of ambivalence around the existence of the subject.” (Davies et al., 2004, p. 363). Lenz Taguchi (2013) also foregrounds that even if trying to resist certain *images of thinking* that assume an I, she and her group enacted them anyway. All these are examples of papers that acknowledge their slippages in what I see as a reflexive gesture.

Considering that we cannot just stop being influenced by the very concepts and ways of relating that we are keen to criticise, a few authors (Davies & Gannon, 2013; Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, p. 304, 2012b; Lather, 1993; St. Pierre, 1997) have chosen to continue using the terms but – after Derrida – *under erasure*. As Lather (1993) does with the concept of *validity* “Rather than jettisoning ‘validity’ choice, I retain the term in order to both circulate and break with the signs that code it.” (p. 674)

In the next section, I bring Derrida (1978) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), to think with him about how the concepts that we criticise still – unavoidably – have a hold on us. I use my meta-reflexivity to think about diffraction and continue to diffract the concept of reflexivity.



## **Chapter 6: Betraying our best intentions: using meta-reflexivity with diffraction**



## Introduction

In this chapter, I take issue with what I find a problematic attitude of assuming that our critical academic work is not also liable to reproduce some of what it is criticising. Drawing on Derrida (1978) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), I emphasise that unavoidably we are going to fall prey to what we are criticising. It is inevitable that our work slips (to a greater or lesser extent) into a position that we are explicitly rejecting.

I focus my attention in research working with the concept of diffraction (Barad, 2007), and also more generally with conceptualisations that embrace tentativeness and openness, to show how they reproduce what they reject. I propose to use meta-reflexivity (as questioning the ways of relating that we are enacting) to think about diffraction. I support a way of relating to the concepts where we assume that we will also enact what we want to move on from. I think that this acknowledgment helps us to problematize and keep on thinking about what our conceptualisations produce, instead of assuming our conceptualisation as the superior term.

If reflexivity is understood as an activity that we engage in unavoidably, because it is in a reflexive process that our sense of self is constantly produced (Foucault, 1990), then it becomes crucial to keep thinking about it. I think that to reconceptualise reflexivity, also through the critique that diffraction poses, works for re-thinking and opening up our practices. Also, as I will argue, I believe that reflexivity (and meta-reflexivity) can contribute to the practice and conceptualisation of diffraction. In this essay, I reflect about how there is always some slippage and even when we want to sustain a diffractive perspective aligned with positive difference, performativity, and decentring practices, there are at the same time practices of identity, security and sameness enacted.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) propose two terms that could be understood as exclusive options: the *rhizome* (random connections that do not follow a hierarchic and dichotomic organisation) and the *tree* (the way of



conceptualising through dualisms and dichotomies). Nonetheless, they are emphatic in saying that the rhizome can always slip into the tree and the other way around. They do not draw a notion of their philosophy as embracing the rhizome and rejecting the tree but as a *constant* work of bringing the trees back to the rhizome. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) write about how we unavoidably construct dualisms even when we actively do not want to, and we need to work again at undoing them and in this endeavour we produce yet another one, “the furniture we are forever rearranging.” (p. 21)

In the past chapters, I have been contrasting an inclusive way of relating to the concepts – where I underline the different usefulness of each concept – to an either-or, dichotomising way of relating – that affirms one concept as superior than the other. I am aware that in this very operation, to an extent, I am also performing what I criticise: I am thinking that relating to the concepts thinking about their usefulness is the best way to go. I think that this betrayal of my best intentions is unavoidable. Nonetheless, I do try not to reduce what I criticise to a simplified thing that needs to be eschewed. With psychoanalysis, I think that the either-or way of thinking is necessary and useful in generating order (Ogden, 1988); an order that we might need for developing our arguments, as I do here.

Using Derrida’s idea of writing under erasure (Derrida, 1978, 1997), I invite to acknowledge how the concepts and practices that we reject – and more when we reject them drastically – still have a hold on us. I show how some texts that explicitly affirm values as tentativeness, openness, non-dichotomising operations, etc. reproduce what they so actively reject.

In this chapter, I first bring Derrida and then Deleuze and Guattari to think about how we unavoidably reproduce what we explicitly want to avoid. I then bring some examples of works where there is slippage – more or less acknowledged – to what the text is clearly rejecting. Finally, I think about how diffraction can be benefited from reflexivity and the other way around. I make

a further attempt to diffract reflexivity and to use meta-reflexivity with diffraction.

### **Derrida under erasure**

Derrida (1978) places the reassuring need to master anxiety as fundamental for the production of a centred structure. Centred structures are theories that tell us how things are. The structure has an immobile centre that needs to be outside the structure. The centre is what cannot be changed and what regulates the structure. This centre grants us the security of the game because there is something permanent beyond the reach of play.

On Derrida's (1978) account, Nietzsche, Freud and Heidegger are part of the rupture of the centred structure. From then on, we can no longer rely on a fixed and immobile centre to which to refer to as means for orientation and certainty. Instead, there is a vast limitless play of possibilities and the possibility of resting in a reliable certitude is no longer available.

This was the moment when language invaded the universal problematic, the moment when, in the absence of a center or origin, everything became discourse – provided we can agree on this word – that is to say, a system in which the central signified, the original or transcendental signified, is never absolutely present outside a system of differences. The absence of the transcendental signified extends the domain and the play of signification infinitely. (Derrida, 1978, p. 280)

Nonetheless, this change is not as neat or total. The break that does not grant us an old reliable certainty and instead offer us an infinite play of possibilities, is not a clean or sharp break. In contrast, to criticise the system that we have been brought up in, we cannot but use – at least to some extent – the concepts, the tools and the practices that have produced us as subjects.

There is no sense in doing without the concepts of metaphysics in order to shake metaphysics. We have no language – no syntax and no lexicon – which is foreign to this history; we can pronounce not a single destructive proposition which has not already had to slip into the form, the logic, and the implicit postulations of precisely what it seeks to contest. (Derrida, 1978, pp. 280-281)

Derrida (1978) relates the crisis of metaphysics – the old certainties – with the crisis that implied that the European culture stopped being the centre, the only possibility. The birth of ethnology, that implies a critical approach to ethnocentrism, was when the European culture was no longer the only centre. Nonetheless, even if being profoundly critical, ethnology is still majorly a European science, using the concepts that it criticises. Derrida thinks of this slippage as a necessary fact not as a contingency.

This does not justify, for Derrida, an uncritical use of the concepts or a giving up in the attempts to critique. Instead, we can relate to this necessity of using the concepts we criticise in different ways. A better way of relating to them is through thinking critically how we are still using what we denounce. “The quality and fecundity of a discourse are perhaps measured by the critical rigor with which this relation to the history of metaphysics and to inherited concepts is thought” (Derrida, 1978, p. 282). The answer that Derrida (1978) offers to this is to conserve the concepts but to use them denouncing their limits.

No longer is any truth value attributed to them; there is a readiness to abandon them, if necessary, should other instruments appear more useful. In the meantime, their relative efficacy is exploited, and they are employed to destroy the old machinery to which they belong and of which they themselves are pieces. This is how the language of the social sciences criticizes *itself*. (Derrida, 1978, p. 284)

I think that Derrida (1978) is proposing a particular way of relating to the concepts, a way that I find very generative. If we were to relate to new concepts in a way in which we absolutely believe them or idolise them as a kind of salvation, or the only possibility appealing to us – as it can happen with for example the term reflexivity, deconstruction or diffraction – then, we would be relating to them as the one truth and we would be falling prey of the same that we are criticising.

Derrida (1978) uses the notion of *bricoleur* of Levi-Strauss. By this concept he means the use of concepts of traditions and theories that are under our criticism as tools even if they were not ‘originally’ made for that purpose. This allegory brings to my mind the elaboration of mosaics or patchwork. The

person that does a mosaic or a patchwork uses pieces of what once was a 'full' object to create something new.

Derrida (1978) explains that Levi-Strauss uses the concept of the bricoleur in contrast to the engineer who does not borrow but creates its own tools; but if by bricolage we understand to borrow concepts from other heritages that have come under suspicion, then every theory is a bricoleur, therefore the engineer – the one who constructs its discourses from the scratch – is a myth. As Levi-Strauss says that the bricolage is mythopoetic, Derrida resorts that probably the engineer is a myth that the bricoleur created.

In the last paragraph, we have deconstructed the term engineer, but it is not so simple. Derrida (1978) shows that, for example, the deconstruction of the concept of the engineer through the notion of the bricoleur ends up breaking the very notion of the bricoleur because the bricoleur was sustained in the opposition with the engineer.

As soon as we cease to believe in such an engineer and in a discourse which breaks with the received historical discourse, and as soon as we admit that every finite discourse is bound by a certain *bricolage* and that the engineer and the scientist are also species of *bricoleurs*, then the very idea of *bricolage* is menaced and the difference in which it took on its meaning breaks down. (Derrida, 1978, p. 285)

This shows that the usefulness of a term like the bricoleur, that challenges some dichotomic assumptions, depends for its operation on a contrasting dichotomy. In that way, we do not get completely away from a certain foundationalism, even in criticising it. For opposing the dichotomy, we need another dichotomy. That is why, as I have mentioned, Derrida (1978, 1997) proposes to still use the concepts – if they are useful – but denouncing its limits, as he says to use them *under erasure*. As Spivak explains: "This is to write a word, cross it out, and then print both word and deletion. (Since the word is inaccurate, it is crossed out. Since it is necessary, it remains legible)." (Spivak, 1997, p. xiv)

Spivak (1997) makes the point that it is important to assume that we are within metaphysics even if it is put under a critical gaze. To think that it is the end of

metaphysics would actually be to reproduce a metaphysical way of thinking that dreams of a full closure. Again, the way proposed is to use the concepts but under erasure.

The movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. (Derrida, 1997, p. 24)

I find this point very important and this is what I delve on in the following sections. How the lack of consideration of how we enact what we reject, or the belief that we can aspire to an ideal, can lead us to be far more trapped by what we think we are avoiding. As Derrida (1978) writes about reading and making philosophy:

What I want to emphasize is simply that the passage beyond philosophy does not consist in turning the page of philosophy (which usually amounts to philosophizing badly), but in continuing to read philosophers *in a certain way*. (Derrida, 1978, p. 288)

Derrida (1978) proposes a way of relating to the concepts. As I have said my notion of meta-reflexivity has to do with interrogating precisely which ways of relating we are enacting. Using this meta-reflexivity, I argue that we can relate to some concepts – as deconstruction, as diffraction, as discourse, etc. - announcing how we embrace them, nonetheless, in this very action we betray these ‘critical’ concepts we cherish because we relate to them as a truth or as an identity flag that we hold.

### **An input from Deleuze and Guattari**

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) postulate three ways of thinking: one is the *tree-like root-thinking*, the second is the *fascicular-root thinking* and the third is the *rhizomatic thinking*. The first has a central root and grows from hierarchies and dichotomies – like a tree and its branches. The second does not have a central root but a fascicular root system but ends up reproducing a root anyway. The third, the rhizomatic, moves away from roots; it is a flat multiplicity with no hierarchy nor any fixed coding or categories.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) claim that even the fascicular thinking that makes a criticism to unity (i.e. Nietzsche) unwittingly posits back a unity (i.e. eternal return). They write: “The world has become chaos, but the book remains the image of the world: radicle-chaosmos rather than root-cosmos. A strange mystification: a book all the more total for being fragmented.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 6)

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) argue that in these cases, concepts like the ‘multiple’ are put forward with plenty of enthusiasm but this is far from sufficient to actually enact them. That is why they affirm that one has to *make* the concepts, not only to announce them. This is similar to Derrida when he says: “It must have the form of that of which it speaks” (Derrida, 1978, p. 286). I understand this as a way of relating to the concepts that performs what it announces: If I announce tentativeness, I need also to *make* my inquiry tentative, I need to actually relate to the concept in a tentative way.

Nonetheless, in affirming tentativeness, I am necessarily not tentative. So, is it possible to *make* the concepts? I understand that Deleuze and Guattari (1987) hint at this possibility with the rhizome, but as Lenz Taguchi (2013) makes clear, in the attempt to produce a rhizomatic way of thinking it is unavoidable to unwittingly reproduce other images of thinking that do assume a root.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) consider if it can be said that they are bringing a new dualism in opposing rhizomes to trees, *maps* to *traces*<sup>47</sup>. But they put forward that these are not neatly separated. “There are knots of arborescence in rhizomes, and rhizomatic offshoots in roots” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 20). They assert that it does happen that the rhizome gets rooted, that we end up reproducing exactly what we wanted to dismantle, that the map becomes trace. Then, they argue, what needs to be done is to bring the closed structures

---

<sup>47</sup> As I understand from Deleuze and Guattari (1987), maps are open to connections and experimentation without closing on itself or reproducing an established explanation and tracings are closing down into a previously established idea that does not bring novelty.

back again into the map, back into the rhizome. “It is a question of method: the tracing should always be put back on the map” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 13). There is a sense of needing to continuously work to deterritorialize what has been coded and taken.

We invoke one dualism only in order to challenge another. We employ a dualism of models only in order to arrive at a process that challenges all models. Each time, mental correctives are necessary to undo the dualisms we had no wish to construct but through which we pass. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 20)

For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the rhizome and the tree are no strangers to each other, but slip into each other constantly. With this thinking there is not an encouragement to enter the rhizome and leave behind what is criticised for good, but an awareness of the constant slippage and the need to continuously work to undo the dualisms that we necessarily use.

In the next section, I wish to make a critical review to some conceptualisations that I see as missing this meta-reflexive work of thinking what they are unwittingly reproducing. As I envisage it, this meta-reflexive work has to do with thinking how we are relating to ourselves/our work and not only to what we are putting forward in terms of content.

### **Slippage**

A researcher can state their position with adjectives that convey ambiguity and opacity but reading their article we could perceive that they relate to themselves with a strong self-certainty: *ambiguity and opacity are announced but not made*. That could produce an inquiry that creates neat categorizations, even if the author does not have the intention to do this. Henceforth, I think that is relevant to think about how we are relating to ourselves and our work and what that is producing.

As I have mentioned, I think that Barad (2007) does produce a dichotomy even when she is explicitly ‘against’ them. She says:

Diffraction does not fix what is the object and what is the subject in advance, and so, unlike methods of reading one text or set of ideas

against another where one set serves as a fixed frame of reference, diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how these exclusions matter. (Barad, 2007, p. 30)

But whilst she affirms this, she also makes a comparison table between reflexivity (as reflection) and diffraction, not granting a space to continue thinking about reflexivity because reflexivity is established as something already known that needs to be eschewed.

Linnell, Bansel, Ellwood and Gannon (2008) also announce loudly what they intend to do, they say: "This article is an attempt to hold thought open in a textual space that often forecloses thought" (Linnell et al., 2008, p. 285). I wonder: What are they doing when saying this? It seems to me as a declaration, a professing. Are they opening thought when they affirm that they are attempting to do so? They continue: "We take our work and ourselves within that work as precarious, as tentative, as uncertain. We are more interested in this article in asking questions that might keep thought open than in providing answers"(Linnell et al., 2008, p. 286). I think that this looks more like an identity claim: "We are like this and not like that". The statement in itself *is* an answer. The slippage, the contradiction, is inside the text. Furthermore, in the paper these authors do not thematise, they are not meta-reflexive about this, maybe inevitable, contradiction.

Is it not necessarily that in announcing our intentions in a text we are positing an anterior subjectivity with intentions that are directly followed by actions and results? Are we not slipping to a humanist perspective when doing this even if we put forward Deleuzian concepts? For example, (Löytönen, Koro-Ljungberg, Carlson, Orange, & Cruz, 2015) say:

Thus, the purpose of this article is not to create understandings or describe our writing experiment per se but to bring together different entanglements, rhizomes, forces, and thoughts that might produce writing as sensed and lived in a variety of spaces and at different times. (Löytönen et al., 2015, p. 23)



I believe that there are centring, humanistic and identificatory practices and that these are maybe more influential when they are rejected and not acknowledged. Psychoanalysis teaches us that what we do not recognise – what is unconscious – has more strength and influence than what we dare to allow ‘in ourselves’.

The theories about the multiplicity of self/selves in psychoanalysis (Bromberg, 1996, 2010; D. B. Stern, 2004), invite us to think about ourselves as unavoidably fragmented in different configurations of self-experience. The aim of therapy is not to bring about a coherent unity but to allow different and contradictory selves to be connected with each other and not estranged and totally dissociated from each other. This would add flexibility and richness to our sense of self. This leads me to think how it can be generative to acknowledge that as researchers we concomitantly inhabit different positions and that it might be impoverishing to try to stick to a single one.

Jackson and Mazzei (2008) say:

Like Deleuze (1968/1994), we wish to disturb thought so as not to reproduce what we already think, know, and experience. We also want to expose the fallibility of the narrative “I” and move toward a performative “I” who uses experience not simply as a foundation for knowledge but as a concept “under erasure” to expose the indecidability of meaning, of self, of narrative— without requiring self-identification or mastery. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2008, p. 305)

It is interesting to me to use here reflexive questions that ask for example: How it is to be “like Deleuze” or to think “with Deleuze”. What is happening there relationally? Maybe there is a sense of group, an adherence, an identification: “we, the Deleuzians”. So, besides enacting a self that claims to not require self-identification, there is another self that wants to be “like Deleuze”. I wonder: Is there a sense of pride in, paradoxically, affirming oneself as decentred – or aiming at it? Is this “like Deleuze” a centring action?

In a more socially situated vein, I also wonder: how could we think about the social and political dimensions involved in the interest that certain authors have, for instance, for Deleuze or Barad? As Pillow (2015) wonders: “Who are

we thinking diffraction with and why?” (p. 429). She asks what do the conversations on diffraction do to, for example, conceptualisations of race, identity and gender? Pillow (2015) points out how very often the authors speaking about diffraction are in a concretely separated and privileged space in journals and conferences, preventing rich and complex conversations with other groups of scholars and theories. Thus, even if there is a theoretical embrace of multiplicity and difference, maybe sometimes the actual practice can slip into more homogenous and excluding ways of relating.

Here I have thought about how even if we attempt to open new routes of thoughts and move away from old practices of identity and certainties we, maybe inevitably, go against our best intentions. Using my meta-reflexivity, our ways of relating to ourselves/others/our work might be reproducing what we are strongly rejecting. In the next section, I continue with this line of thought bringing this meta-reflexivity to bear more specifically into the concept of diffraction and diffractive practices. Afterwards, I think about how reflexivity can be shaken and re-thought through diffraction. In this endeavour, I hope to show some benefits of diffracting reflexivity and using meta-reflexivity with diffraction.

### **Using meta-reflexivity with Diffraction**

Barad (2007) comments on the pervasive force that drag us back to more humanist conceptualisations. She asserts that poststructuralism, by the hand of Foucault and Butler, tries to go against this force but nonetheless is not successful in their attempt.

Each of these powerful attempts rockets our cultural imaginary out of a well-worn stable orbit. But ultimately the power of these vigorous interventions is insufficient to fully extricate these theories from the seductive nucleus that binds them, and it becomes clear that each has once again been caught in some other orbit around the same nucleus. (p. 135)

So, she recognises the revolutionary potential of these theories but underscores that they nevertheless remain orbiting around the same humanistic nucleus. She affirms that a different operation is required: “What is

needed is a rigorous simultaneous challenge to all components of this gripping long-range force” (p. 135). Reading Barad’s text until here, I get a sense of a, maybe excessive, enthusiasm. How are we/is she to do that? I feel an absolutist overpowering tone: *to have a rigorous and simultaneous challenge to all components*. Is this not a new centre? Is this not a hope similar in form to the ones that characterise the illustration? I think that there is an implicit rhetoric of progression and development that makes me feel uneasy. I breathe again when I read what I see as a meta-reflexive comment in a footnote.

It would be surprising if my own attempt at making a successful ionizing ‘quantum leap’ out of the humanist-representationalist orbit doesn’t fall prey to the same pull, snagged by some component or another, so great is this force. My hope, nonetheless, is that this endeavour may yet produce new possibilities that reconfigure the range of possible new attempts. And that may well have made it worthwhile. (Barad, 2007, p. 428)

I feel a relief reading this meta-reflexive footnote. I think that Barad (2007) is, at least implicitly, thinking about how she is relating to herself, to her ideas and to her readership. I think that this meta-reflexivity makes more space for relating to the book in other ways that are not simply to follow diffraction as a new ‘product’ that has better answers.

Bozalek and Zembylas (2017) write about their use of both diffractive and reflexive methodologies. They think about how these practices entail different ways of articulating the research process and the subjectivities involved:

The collective diffractive methodology used in our multiple reading group encounters was different from these journal entries, which required an individual perspective rather than an intra-active relational one, a position of distance and hindsight from the group rather than the understanding that we are part of, entangled and implicated in everything happening in the group and the material world. (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017, p. 123)

This speaks to me of how a practice where we do not think of separate selves but of entanglements. I would say that we are aware of ‘ourselves’ (putting this term under erasure) as always in process and in relation. To be reflexive about ‘ourselves’ as always part of an entanglement helps to resist a tendency

towards a personal reflexivity (being aware of ourselves as bounded selves) that starts with a fundamental separation between the subject and the environment. I think about this as opening a particular practice of the 'self' (Foucault, 1990) that, paradoxically, implies an effort not to subtract oneself from the entanglement.

Nonetheless, crucially, I think that the individualising tendency will inevitably reappear. This is not to say that this practice is not worth it, I think it is very important and generative but it is not a panacea. With psychoanalysis (Britton, 2010; Britton & Steiner, 1994), I think that the overvaluation of an idea can help to deal with uncertainty together with leading to a more rigid, dogmatic thinking. From this psychoanalytic perspective, it is expected that an idea evolves from the frenzy of its discovery to see it in its limitations – to see it as one possibility – and in this way, it does not become a dogma.

I ask myself meta-reflexively, how am I relating to this psychoanalytic idea here? Am I placing it as a more fundamental truth that can dictate how ideas need to evolve? Maybe. Paradoxically, I would need to be able to criticise this idea to really enact its content. Maybe there is something gloomy here about Kleinian psychoanalysis with its ideal of moderation. Maybe it is not about not being continuously excited by an idea but about acknowledging, as Deleuze and Guattari (1987) do, that it needs continuous work: "the furniture we are forever rearranging." (p. 21)

Jackson and Mazzei (2017) show us how diffraction can be seen in a research process. A crucial aspect is that the interpretation of the intentions and agency cannot be ascribed to a person as if separated from what they are intra-acting with. "We recognize how from a posthumanist stance, agency is constituted as an enactment, not something that an individual possesses, nor something that relies on a demarcation between human/nonhuman." (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p. 1094)

They give the example of a woman who switches her way of articulating her 'experience': First she is speaking in the kitchen where she has an empowered

and critical stance but then at the moment when she hears the footsteps of her husband approaching, her discourse shifts to one more conservative and accepting of the authority. The researchers do not interpret this as a shift 'in' the bounded subjectivity of this woman but as different assemblages that produce differently.

The assemblage produces her as mother who knows what is best for her children, who feeds those bodies, and for that instant, the territory of critique is formed, until the material force of footsteps reclaim the territory of patriarchy. The territory that was claimed in the kitchen assemblage is now fragmented and carried away. The force of Will's footsteps organize to make a new territory, the territory of small-town conservative patriarchy where she is now no longer critic, but docile. (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p. 1094)

I think that here there is an interpretation of how the assemblages make different 'voices' emerge. What comes to my attention is that this interpretation appears as made by the 'voice' of an author that is, at least partially, outside the situation that is interpreted. Nonetheless, from what is explicitly put forward in the theory of diffraction we should think about the author(s) – the interpreter(s) – as part of the assemblage. The authors clarify: "*It is not a matter of how a human voice articulates those things, but how the intra-action is an agential cut that assembles them and territorializes a space*" (Jackson & Mazzei, 2017, p. 1096). So, there is not an 'interpreter' and a situation to be interpreted. The 'interpreter' also is formed – becomes – in particular intra-actions that delineate its boundaries in particular ways. Nonetheless, sometimes (and maybe always at the moment of writing an interpretation), it appears as if it was objective, as if it was apart from what is 'described'.

A crucial difficulty that I find in diffractive analysis is that as it is assumed that everything is in a constant intra-action and so there cannot be a clear-cut between one agency and another, many times we end up listing an indefinite and infinite list of what is affecting the current situation. "The list of entangled agencies is potentially endless" (Davies & Gannon, 2013, p. 365). Now I think in my writing entangled with the temperature, the sounds of the street, my dog in the couch, the colours of the room, how the light falls on the floor, how I feel

some anxiety, how I anticipate what is coming, etc. I think that this is a way of relating to myself where I blur myself as part of a greater intra-action. I wonder, though, what does it produce to name these lists? I am inclined to think that it results in an aesthetic poetic blurring of boundaries. I believe that it makes the point of stating how there are innumerable things intra-acting in every moment and not a simple causality or explanation. But can we go further/elsewhere than to state this over and over again? Maybe the texts that use diffraction produce these accounts that emphasise the particularity and entangled nature of each situation but what do they do to trouble situations where for example unfairness and domination are present? Maybe in these situations being reflexive about how hegemonic discourses are present in our accounts can generate a troubling of hegemonic orders and that can have (another) political impact.

Also, I think that because of the concept of intra-action (Barad 2007), where the author cannot be separated from the whole situation, reflexivity about the 'subjective involvement' is not encouraged. To be reflexive about our thoughts, feelings and actions as an actor would assume a separateness and a looking at a distance. I resonate with this but also with the advantages that can have to be personally reflexive as authors in troubling the authority and correctness of our interpretations.

For instance, Davies (2014) makes a diffractive analysis of a preschools boys relationship with anger. In her observations a new boy, Jonathan, arrives to the preschool and in a series of intra-actions other boy called Tom, loses his centrality and builds up anger. Davies writes about Tom:

Tom had lost his one-time power to initiate the movement of the group of boys, and not only could he no longer trust his friends to include him, but even his moment of glory in kicking a goal was taken away from him. He had experienced a profound loss of agency. (Davies, 2014, p. 737)

I thought that Davies (2014) made quite direct interpretations of the 'inner' world of the child. These are written as facts. How is she relating to her

participants? I missed a reflexive wonderment of her involvement in these particular interpretations, or certain tentativeness and openness to possible different interpretations.

Nonetheless, maybe what I miss here is just something that does not fit with a diffractive analysis because it would entail to refer to an interpreting subject.

A diffractive approach opens an onto-epistemological space of encounter where a researcher's task is not to tell of something that exists independent of the encounter (producing the appearance of truth), but to open up an immanent subjective truth—that which becomes true, ontologically and epistemologically, in the moment of the encounter. (Davies, 2014, p. 734)

So, maybe Davies is just not worried about the debate of this being her interpretation or a fact. Maybe this just bring us back to problems of the 'really real' (Haraway, 1997). Still, I think that the quote that tell us how Tom feels has this appearance of truth that Davies is criticising. I think that in having this diffractive approach as it is portrayed, it would be useful to make a closer analysis of these encounters: What of Davies emerged and came in contact with the pre-school, the teachers, the children, the space, etc.? Thinking about intra-action it results difficult to name any participant because in this naming there is a certain assumption of independence, but as she also underscores, it is necessary to hold these names under erasure because I am afraid that without them we cannot say anything.

With Haraway and Barad we want to acknowledge that the positioning is a process of emerging in the making not a stable position, but how could we put that on the text. We want to articulate our research in intra-active terms but then, with Derrida (1978, 1997), we say that it is impossible not to contradict ourselves and we need to use what we criticise.

Davies (2014) reflexively catches herself blaming the new boy Jonathan and making a polarisation and a moralist judgment. She wants to move on from this but I feel that she ends up doing is placing the responsibility in another individual: Tom. She says that Tom from the beginning located the problem in Jonathan, excluding himself.

He blamed the other. But what if, when he first walked away from the bandy amphitheatre, he had been able to intra-act with his anger differently? Could he have engaged in mindful breathing sitting out there on the steps? (Davies, 2014, p. 740)

Is this not this placing the responsibility in Tom? We need to make sense of what happened in that interaction and that might always entail to ascribe different roles and degrees of responsibility. I think she tries to avoid this. She tries to go beyond individualities to think about the children as a collective through which an affect pass. She offers the possibility of yoga and mindfulness as practices that can help the children recognise when exclusion is running through their collective body and to do something with it. Reading this surprised me, I thought in the need of the author to find solutions and in the specificity of the particular solutions offered. Not that it is not a possibly very good option but that it might also reflect the preferences, values and practices of the author. How do the children, from different social and cultural backgrounds, would relate to the yoga sessions? Is it that dynamics of violence and exclusion can be simply resolved with mindfulness and yoga? I am afraid that with reflexivity being eschewed the assumptions of the author are just not acknowledged and with that other possible articulations (e.g. a social and political questioning of the dynamics of domination in pre-school) are made less likely. This for me is a very important use and benefit of using reflexivity.

I think that reflexivity can be restraining, can be enabling, can open up possibilities and and close them down. As Davies said in a previous paper, reflexivity can open up. "In that way, the reflexive arc on the process did more than dampen down and paralyze. It occasioned opportunity to develop new ways of thinking and acting" (Davies et al., 2004, p. 375). It is about how we are relating to ourselves in that moment. Therefore, I do not think that it is useful to eschew reflexivity (in its different conceptualisations) but to meta-reflexively ask how we are relating to ourselves – including diffractively – and what is that producing.



## **Diffractioning reflexivity and my meta-reflexivity**

As I have argued in the previous chapter, I do not think that reflexivity sits comfortably with an overarching and reductive definition of it. Reflexivity has been reconceptualised and I believe that the emergence of diffraction can further this continuous process of challenging and re-thinking reflexivity.

In my conceptualisation, from a relational thinking, reflexivity asks: what is going on now? How am I relating to myself/others/texts, etc.? In this endeavour, there is not an assumption that there are previous identities influencing our activities. Instead, the question: “what is going on now?” assumes that there are material, human and non-human, ways of relating (intra-actions) that are producing self states, degrees of activity, affects, etc.

Therefore, to me the use of reflexivity is not to see the influence of the researcher in the research, of the psychotherapist in the therapy, or in general of a person in their activities – as if they were separable. In contrast to me the function of meta-reflexivity is to continuously ask: how am ‘I’ relating to ‘this’ now? Understanding that the ‘I’ and the ‘this’ are delineated in the particular ways of relating that are enacted in that moment. Also understanding that the answer to this question is also part of the situation – understanding that the answer is not an accurate response but a situated perspective that can enable other things to happen. So, the aspiration of meta-reflexivity is not to grasp who I am or what happened, but to return to a situation, giving in this endeavour a perspective about it, a perspective that is part of the situation and that can help it to move. I think that this is akin to what Davies and Gannon (2013) argue from a diffractive perspective.

There is no static, stable reality to be investigated, but a complex, intra-acting, emergent, and mobile set of forces (material, affective, and conceptual) that must be documented in fine, molecular detail if we are to make sense of ‘what is going on.’ (Davies & Gannon, 2013, p. 374)

Also, Davies and Gannon (2013) insist that their own methodology and theoretical perspectives are part of the inquiry and vital to what emerges from their research. So that the answers to “what is going on?” are entrenched with

how we investigate it. They say: “What we do necessarily shifts, intra-actively, as it engages with the conceptual apparatus that we bring to bear on it.” (Davies & Gannon, 2013, p. 363)

Along these lines, my meta-reflexivity of trying to see how I am relating to myself/others/texts is not apart from my inquiry. When I try to be aware of how am I relating to myself I do not catch myself in relation as if I could see a self that is fixed – that is not being affected by being seen (related to) in particular ways. I argue that when I am trying to be aware of how I am relating to myself this operation is just another way of relating to myself, not a more fundamental operation. Nonetheless, I think that this way of relating to myself can be very generative to both, have a perspective into what we are *making* – what we are concretely reproducing – and open up other possibilities through being aware that what appears is not essential but tied to ways of relating.

Davies and Gannon (2013) work with collective biographies and highlight how the stories that emerge there would have been different if the entanglement was different. They use the ‘subject’ and ‘their’ stories under erasure. In that sense, in Barad’s (2007) terms, the agency that creates the story is the entanglement – not the subject alone.

In this way collective biography dislodges memory from the psychological and historical individual humanist subject and resituates it beyond the subject as a socio-discursive-material accomplishment that always takes place in particular material, affective, spatial and temporal contexts that themselves work on memory. (Davies & Gannon, 2013, p. 372)

This makes sense to me in psychotherapy. Not only in my role as psychotherapist where I am well aware that the articulation of the life and the struggles of a client are particular to this specific intra-action, but also in the role that I have had as client. I have had a few different psychotherapists, each of them in different moments of my life. The different rooms have stayed in my body: how the light was present, how airy, how contained, how beautiful, how wooden, how modern, how invasive was each of them at different moments. My ways of relating with each therapist through our work, how I felt myself with

them, how I was feeling them, how I was arriving and leaving the sessions. Taking the last point, in some occasions, I have taken my bike through calm roads to arrive, in others the busy metro or my car through the traffic. All these, and an innumerable more, have made my childhood memories emerge differently; they have been populated with different characters, different shades, different lights and a different feel to them. It is the whole material and semantic entanglement given in the session what makes the agential cut (Barad 2007) that defines what is interpreted, how we make sense of the situation.

In therapy a more reflexive, essentialist and transparent approach would lead to interpret searching for causes: motives, drives, and trauma. A more relational and also reflexive approach would be more interested in thinking about what is happening now, what is formed in between – and this would be more similar to what a diffractive approach is proposing. But again, this dichotomy is problematic because it simplifies: To establish causes does something relational – it moves something. At the same time, the relational has also a representational flavour when we need to say something about what is happening now.

In a way, what I want to convey is that reflexivity is already diffracted. This does not convince me to leave behind the term reflexivity because I find that the figure of the turning upon oneself is useful and diffraction takes me elsewhere. The act of putting the attention back upon oneself, one's actions, one's creations is already a movement that inevitably brings a novelty. As Derrida argues:

Once the circle turns, once the volume rolls itself up, once the book is repeated, its identification with itself gathers an imperceptible difference which permits us efficaciously, rigorously, that is, discreetly, to exit from closure. In redoubling the closure of the book, one cuts it in half. (Derrida, 1978, p. 295)

And as, performatively, Spivak, *repeats*:

From the moment that the circle turns, that the book is wound back upon itself, that the book repeats itself, its self-identity receives an

imperceptible difference which allows us to step effectively, rigorously, and thus discreetly, out of the closure. (Spivak, 1997, p. xii)

Here we read the imperceptible difference of this returning, of this repetition. “The preface, by daring to repeat the book and reconstitute it in another register, merely enacts what is already the case: the book’s repetitions are always other than the book” (Spivak, 1997, p. xii). We could only think about repetition or about reflection as in capturing oneself if we believe in a static world. “The return, at this point, does not retake possession of something. It does not reappropriate the origin. The latter is no longer in itself.” (Derrida, 1978, p. 295)

So, I keep reflexivity (analysed through my meta-reflexivity) because it takes me to the activity of keeping looking back to how I am relating to myself/others/texts and that is useful. Each way of relating to ourselves has different productions, and each of them can be valuable in different context because of the very context that they produce. Reflexivity is already diffracted. Reflexivity is not about capturing, grasping ourselves, because in the turning things unavoidably move. The turn that makes a reading about what is happening now, what ways of relating I am enacting is very generative because it can open up the possibility of other ways of relating. The meta-reflexive analysis of the ways of relating does not assume a representation of previously set units. It knows that in ‘knowing’ it is producing.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have argued how we are always bound to betray our best intentions even when – or more when – we actively self-ascertain our posture. Drawing on both Derrida (1978) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) this slippage is not avoidable, but somehow structural. With Derrida (1978) we think about using the concepts under erasure; being cautious and aware of how we use what we criticise precisely to make that critique. With Deleuze and Guattari (1987) we cannot avoid producing dualisms and what we can do is to continuously work to undo them, knowing that we will produce yet another one.

I argue, through bringing some examples, how the slippage is always already there and more when it is not acknowledged. I emphasise the need for embracing this necessary slippage producing an inquiry that is aware of its own contradictions and that aims to work with what the concepts produce rather than trying to define them in a clear-cut manner in opposition with other(s) and superiority in front of other(s).

Finally, I have showed the usefulness of bringing concepts that are posited as opposites – reflexivity and diffraction – to think together. In this I am arguing for thinking with, instead of against, to produce novelty and not to make deeper the dualisms. Murris and Bozalek (2019) do something akin to this with their response-able and diffractive reading; they think that the concepts can resonate and do things to each other. They explore this process rather than trying to define each concept in categorical ways.

I propose that diffraction, as divorced from reflexivity and my meta-reflexivity, can produce some disadvantageous consequences. For instance, to propose yet another concept as the one that surely avoids all the drawbacks and hence enacting a way of relating with a high level of self-certainty that militates against the openness and movement that diffraction argues for. Furthermore, I think about some of the benefits of my meta-reflexivity, as to think about and own how I am relating to myself/theory/participants, because a diffractive analysis can make appear the interpretations – that inevitably makes – as emerging from nowhere.

I also propose that reflexivity is already diffracted in that the movement of turning upon myself/others/texts already produces a shift and a movement. Reflexivity produces rather than represents – as in giving an imagine of how things ‘are’. Diffraction can help reflexivity to be aware of how what emerges from ‘me’ is already part of a greater entanglement. It can help me realise that I am not bounded and separated but connected in ways that go well beyond my control and awareness. I offer a meta-reflexivity that asks about how ‘I’ am relating to this other ‘person’, ‘text’, ‘situation’, etc. considering that the very

answer to this question produces 'me' and the 'person', 'text', 'situation' and so on anew.

Finishing this chapter I have also finished with my reconceptualisation of reflexivity as ways of relating that produce. As I have said in the beginning of this thesis, I want to think differently about the notion of being reflexive about our experience, which is a way of making sense of ourselves, through reconceptualising reflexivity and experience. In the next chapter, chapter seven, the last chapter before the conclusions of the thesis, I develop my reconceptualisation of experience. To a great extent, the notion of experience has already been re-worked in the previous chapters, however, now I will focus my attention on it and it will further move how I think differently about being reflexive about our experience.



## **Chapter 7: Re-thinking subjective experience**





## Introduction

Thinking about how we make sense of ourselves, the word *experience* does not take long to appear. When referring to what is going on with us we might draw on our experience. We say that “we make sense of our experience”. Psychotherapists are concerned about helping clients to symbolise their experience. We say that “we need to be reflexive about our experience”. But, how are we to conceptualise the word experience?

I can relate to others’ as well as my experience in many ways and these ways of relating are implying a particular conceptualisation of experience. For example, I might try to understand, symbolise or grasp my experience. The worry about grasping my experience might reflect certain phenomenological conceptualisations of experience that assume that experience is a foundation which we need to reveal and understand as ‘it is’, making our best effort to bracket our assumptions. In contrast, from a poststructural frame, we would not speak so much about understanding experience as if it was something foundational. Instead, we would be worried about how this experience is produced through cultural discourses that necessarily make other kinds of experience unintelligible. Therefore, we would be interested in troubling our experience understanding that our intimate experience is shaped through wider cultural and political frames. Indeed, poststructuralism puts the attention in the cultural and social dimensions, deconstructing and taking away the centrality of the notions of subjectivity and experience with their phenomenological heritage. Another option, with posthumanism, could be to think about experience as something that moves us, that goes through us, but that we do not possess – even if it feels so intimate. From a posthumanist frame, experience does not belong to a bounded subject. Posthumanism helps us to re-join the interest in experience that we had in phenomenology but in a renewed manner that is influenced by poststructuralism but moves beyond its deconstructive efforts to give way to different articulations.

I have sketched above three ways of relating to and conceptualising experience. In this chapter, I explore how each of these traditions conceptualises experience. Firstly, I elaborate on how existential phenomenology (a particular branch within phenomenology) draws on lived experience as a foundation from which language and culture derive. In this perspective, we are not Cartesian isolated minds but bodies that are already in the world; we experience not from the translucency of cognitive consciousness but from the opacity of our bodily perception (Gendlin, 1973; Merleau-Ponty, 2012). Secondly, I explore how poststructuralism troubles this conceptualisation, arguing that every ‘access’ to our experience is already cultural (Butler, 2005; Foucault, 1990); we do not access experience, we produce experience. Thirdly, I elaborate on some posthumanist takes on experience. Posthumanism is influenced by poststructuralism yet also critical of it. I stress how posthumanism brings back the attention to the body and to the affective dimension in a different manner than existential phenomenology. The concept of affect (Clough & Halley, 2007; Massumi, 1995; Williams, 2010) becomes useful here as that which passes through subjectivities – producing these very subjectivities in that movement. After these explorations, I develop a renewed conceptualisation of ‘subjective experience’ using my intra-action with the three traditions explored and my psychoanalytic background.

It is relevant for me to note that I am not aiming at establishing which conceptualisation of experience is better and truer than the others<sup>48</sup> – although I do develop how phenomenology has been criticised by poststructuralism that has also been criticised by posthumanism. To not be aiming at establishing which conceptualisation is better or truer does not translate to me into giving to each theory the same validation. Whenever I articulate something I do it from a set of assumptions. In the context of my academic work I am drawing on posthumanist concepts to articulate how I am relating to the concepts.

---

<sup>48</sup> As I develop in the chapter ‘Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce’, if I was to establish which conceptualisation is truer and better than the others, I would need a neutral place from where to do this.

Paradoxically, posthumanist concepts like Barad's (2007) intra-action and diffraction led me to weight other theories – that are highly criticised by posthumanism – in their productions rather than in their truth-value. Hence, I am more interested in where the different conceptualisations take me – so I use the concepts in a diffractive way.

I can see myself conceptualising experience in any of these three ways in different contexts and each of these ways generates different productions. For example, many times I try to 'listen to my experience' to symbolise what is happening to me and generate a more or less articulated narrative about it – I use experience more closely to phenomenology. Other times I relate to my experience as conceptualised by poststructuralism, generating a distance and critique about my experience as enabled by social discursive practices. For instance, I found myself troubling the keenness that I experienced to sum up points on my Sainsbury's card. Finally, I live experience as it would be understood from a posthumanist framework generating a troubling of the boundedness that make me say 'my experience' and an attention to how I am becoming – how my experience and my subjectivity are constantly transformed, and thus, blurred – in connection to all of what is part of my situation. I have found myself attending to my experience with wonder and curiosity about what is circulating through me. For example, wondering what is happening in the relationship with this person and in this place that I suddenly feel cloudy and de-energised?

I live through the different conceptualisations of experience that I will explore in the next sections. I let the three traditions articulate my experience differently. Even if I speak about the three traditions, it is crucial to me to make clear that these conceptualisations do not stay closed-off in themselves but that they are already intertwined and that they intra-act (with) each other through me, my thinking and my writing, leading me to a creative reconceptualisation of the notion of subjective experience.

I go through the three traditions in this order because this is how they appeared historically and also because this is the order in which I came to know them. When I get to poststructuralism, I bring some of existential phenomenology that is already in the horizon. Furthermore, when I arrive to posthumanism I bring both existential phenomenology and poststructuralism. I realise how subjectivity and experience are assumed by existential phenomenology, questioned by poststructuralism and made impersonal, spread and collective by posthumanism. This generates that the notion of subjective experience gets abolished by the posterior traditions, as belonging to the first. However, my intra-action (with) the three traditions and also with my psychoanalytic background, brought me to a reconceptualisation of subjective experience that I develop in the last section 'Re-thinking about subjective experience'. In this last section, with the help of existential phenomenology and psychoanalysis, I make a turn and bring back the notion of subjective experience – an experience that is 'mine', where I can 'find myself' and be in contact with my intimacy – in a way that it is coherent with posthumanism because I do not think of a bounded subjectivity but a becoming subjectivity. In this turn, I think of how I find myself through losing myself and how, with the concept of affect, there can be a, paradoxically, collective sense of intimacy. Following from that, I consider how poststructuralism with its emphasis on questioning experience as produced socially can help us to problematise where experience as affect can take us. Hence, I develop my reconceptualisation of subjective experience with the posthumanist understanding queered by existential phenomenology, psychoanalysis and poststructuralism. I am able to articulate this reconceptualisation coherently because I give emphasis to what these insights produce (not to their truth-value), looking to arrive at a more enabling conceptualisation of experience.

### **Experience from existential-phenomenology**

Phenomenology, in the broadest sense, studies the structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view (Smith,

2018). It aims to be able to study how things are directly experienced before theoretical or other kind of schemas are interposed. Moreover, phenomenology argues that every theoretical scheme, or science in general, is a derivative of this more fundamental lived experience. (Merleau-Ponty, 2012)

According to Smith (2018), Husserl started this philosophy and his followers have drawn on his writings but have also departed greatly from his perspective. Heidegger, his successor, thought that Husserl's emphasis in consciousness and subjectivity was neo-Cartesian. Heidegger does not agree to bracket the ontological questions – as Husserl proposes – because we find ourselves already in the world. Sartre and Merleau-Ponty are very influenced by Heidegger and are associated with existential phenomenology (Craig, 1998). For Sartre (2015) consciousness cannot but be understood as already in the world. On his part, Merleau-Ponty (2012) puts the stress in our bodily engagement to the world, stressing that our experience is necessarily embodied and situated.

In this section, I take the existential perspective on phenomenology. Some questions that emerge from my intra-action (with) this perspective are: How are we to conceive experience and what is its relation to our sense of self and to the reflective 'I'? Can we give a transparent account of our experience? How reflection affects pre-reflective experience? I explore what the conceptualisation of experience in an existential phenomenological account makes me able to open in my life situations.

### ***The reflective 'I' emerging from the pre-reflective experience***

Existential phenomenology criticises the solipsistic and rationalistic perspective portrayed by Descartes (Frie & Reis, 2001). Broadly, we could say that existential phenomenology tries to depart from a view of consciousness as if it was a cognitive endeavour performed by a 'constituting I' separated from embodiment and situatedness. Contrary to that, this stream underlines that consciousness is embodied and originally pre-reflective and that the

reflective 'I' can only be understood in reference to our immediate bodily immersion in the world. (Dreyfus, 2000)

According to Zahavi (2003), Heidegger says that there is not an 'I' from the beginning but intentional life. Intentionality is a main concept in phenomenology which stresses that the main characteristic of consciousness is to always be directed towards something and not in-itself: when I am conscious, I am always conscious of something. Intentionality does not require a reflective I; experiences are felt to be my experiences but not from an established I. We do not need to seek things and life out there as if we were already formed as reflective subjects looking to understand the world and our experiences. Instead, we find ourselves always already in the world. More to the point, there is a co-givenness of self and world<sup>49</sup>.

The idea of the co-givenness of self and world takes me to think about how we can have a sense of ourselves through how others relate to us. I look at the face of my loved ones and their expressions and movements when they are with me gives me – without an explicit and thematised awareness – a sense of myself. Materially, the world also gives me a sense of myself, I stand on the ground and I implicitly know that I am not that heavy, that the ground can support me.

Likewise, according to Sartre (2015), we do not know ourselves through a reflective and cognitive grasp, but we find ourselves already and immediately in situations. We come to know ourselves because we are reflected in the enterprises that we undertake. As we can see, this follows the line of Heidegger's thoughts about how we come to grasp ourselves. In Heidegger's

---

<sup>49</sup> From psychoanalysis, there is also the notion that the 'I' is something that emerges, an achievement (Ogden, 1986, 1988; D. N. Stern, 2000). Stern's theory (2000a) is clearly phenomenologically influenced. For him there is an embodied mind - a primary consciousness that is not self-reflective "Each time there is a moment of primary consciousness, the self as experiencer is felt and is situated in the world. At that moment, the sense of an emergent self appears" (xviii)

propositions the familiarity with oneself “does not take the form of a reflective self-perception or a thematic self-observation, nor does it involve any kind of self-objectivation” (Zahavi, 2003, p. 162). According to Heidegger, we do not need to look in for an elusive ‘I’ but to worldly experience and we will find the situated self. For Heidegger, “I am acquainted with myself when I am captured and captivated by the world.” (Zahavi 2003, 164)

This approach to experience makes me think about all of what is happening in psychotherapy in a bodily manner without an explicit elaboration of it. From this perspective, verbal interpretations have a secondary role in comparison to the more pervasive influence of our bodily ways of being together as some psychotherapeutic approaches argue. (Boston Change Process Study Group & Nahum, 2008; Bruschweiler-Stern et al., 2002; D. N. Stern, 2000)

According to Merleau-Ponty (2012) we cannot escape the fact that we are given in a world. Perception is the background in which my conscious thoughts take shape (Merleau-Ponty 2012). For instance, when I am formulating my argument for this text, I am not writing from nowhere, I am writing from my situation. My situation is the implicit background from which my argument is taking shape and without which I could not understand what I am arguing.

Merleau-Ponty (2012) distances himself from idealism because he situates perception in the body which is embedded in the world. Relevantly, Merleau-Ponty argues that what we encounter in the world goes beyond our explicit and conscious acts and volitions. For example, I relate to the colours of this room in a bodily manner without being aware of it. The colours are in synchronization with my body – for example giving a sensation of expansion – without my volition being part of it. In Merleau-Ponty’s (2012) terms experience is understood from perception as a communion that is given pre-personally and through the opacity of the body.

Sartre (2015) distinguishes the reflective consciousness from the pre-reflective consciousness that we have explored above. Reflective consciousness is positional, it takes itself as an object. Remarkably, according to Sartre (2015),



reflective and positional consciousness – the ‘I’ – emerges from the *look* that another reflective consciousness poses on me. I only become aware of myself as an object through the look of the other that makes me one.

This mediation given by the emergence of the reflexive I is what phenomenology attempts to bracket by going back to the experience as it is lived. The reflexive I is redirected from its *natural attitude* (Merleau-Ponty, 2012) to follow the stream of pre-reflective consciousness as close to it as it can, attempting to bracket all possible interpretations, beliefs and theories. In this sense, phenomenology is close to person-centred and focusing oriented therapies that try to follow the felt experience of the client, reflecting it back being careful of not intruding with our own beliefs and theories.

For Heidegger, it is important to remain close to the stream of life (Feyaerts & Vanheule, 2015). In this sense reflexivity – as a conscious, thematic and logical activity – would move away from it. Heidegger argues that a “hermeneutical understanding remains within and accompanies factic life, and simply raises and accentuates it into a new level of transparency and expressibility.” (Zahavi, 2003, p. 168)

It is clear how existential phenomenology insists that reflection needs to be on the pre-reflective and the conundrum is about how can it be possible to reflect on the pre-reflective without changing it. For Sartre (2015) there is a possibility of a pure reflection that only discloses what is already there. In contrast, Merleau-Ponty (2012) proposes that the reflection on the pre-reflective is always through the opacity of the body and not through a transparent consciousness.

In the next section, I develop Gendlin’s contribution to how we can reflect on pre-reflective experience. Gendlin was very influenced by Merleau-Ponty and also gives great emphasis to embodiment and to the opacity of our awareness. Importantly, Gendlin – who besides having been a philosopher was also a psychotherapist – does not focus on describing experience ‘as it is’, but on elaborating on or working-through experience. In this endeavour, Gendlin

assumes that reflection – or *focusing* on his terms – will change our way of experiencing and this is something desired.

### ***Focusing on the felt sense***

I believe that Gendlin is a very relevant later contribution to existential phenomenology. Gendlin (1964) proposes the concept of the *felt sense*. The felt sense is a vague bodily feeling that we are always experiencing in the background; it is not an emotion because an emotion has a more specific flavour, in contrast, the felt sense is vague and opaque. In the process of *focusing* – a technique that Gendlin developed – we can bring it to the foreground. The felt sense has a more relational conceptualisation than the previous articulations in existential phenomenology. The felt sense is not conceived as individual – it is not bounded in one person – in contrast, it emerges in the fundamental intermingling with our surroundings.

Gendlin (1973, 2004) elaborated on the process – focusing – of giving a verbal or some kind of symbolic referent to the felt sense. That is to articulate the felt sense according to what it is offering to us. He argues that giving a referent to the felt sense transforms it. When we articulate it, we move our experiencing forward: we elaborate experience.

Gendlin (1973) makes a further contribution to the dilemma about the possibility of accessing ‘pure experience’. He articulates the inquiry differently in a way that moves away from the conundrum of trying to access pure lived experience without a scheme that modifies it.

Obviously, we cannot state experience, as it is unstated. Let us take the bull by the horns and study the ways stating can affect experience. In this way we make a field of study out of what was an embarrassment.  
(Gendlin, 1973, p. 291)

Gendlin’s perspective is more relational. It is not interested in capturing ‘pure experience’, as if we could isolate it from situations, language and culture. In his perspective, everything is already intermingled; therefore, what makes sense is to study these relationships. According to Gendlin (1973), experience is already organised by culture, language and situations – but this does not

exhaust experience. When we say something *from* this experience we further organise it. In this sense, experience is all the time in process of being formed. What we 'capture' in our statements is not something that was already there fully formed; instead, in every articulation, we keep on forming and transforming experience.

For example, now I attend to my felt sense in my chest and get a sensation of sand blowing like in a desert but it does not feel very hot or cold. This articulation moves my felt sense and now it feels like a spiral of sand coming up from my chest to my throat; it feels good, strong, liberating. I feel my force, my strength. I think that maybe the academic writing and speaking can make me feel strong and enlivened.

When I started focusing just now on my felt sense I did not know what was going to come up. It is a discovery/creation that articulates and moves my experience. I feel a need to do this especially when I am feeling more stuck or when I feel confused about what I feel. There is something about articulating from the felt sense that gives me freshness in a way that a more cognitive understanding would not allow. With focusing I do feel that I articulate my lived experience.

Importantly, according to Gendlin (1964, 1968, 1973, 1997a, 2004) it makes a big difference to ground our statements from our experience or felt sense rather than from our rational mind. It is different when we speak about what is happening to us as if we were trying to logically infer what is going on than when we start from our vague and opaque bodily feeling of the situation. In Gendlin's theory when we articulate from the felt sense we affect it and through this a process is activated. In contrast, when we speak from rationality the chances are that our felt sense stays frozen.

This idea makes me consider a notion of reflection as needing to be grounded in the pre-reflective lived experience, which is always more complex than what we can articulate, because this articulation transforms it, helps it to move. This

would stress the importance of a reflective articulation of our bodily experience – understanding that this very articulation is forming this experience.

I consider Gendlin's theory and focusing practice very useful in my clinical practice and personally in my life. Focusing has taught me to attend to my experience – to my felt sense – in a way that I need to stay with its vagueness and opacity until a form emerges and I can say something about my felt sense now in this situation.

### **Experience from poststructuralism<sup>50</sup>**

The poststructural critique amounts to say that when I refer to my bodily experience, this is not a ground; my experience of myself could not be in the way it is if it was not because I am inscribed within cultural discourses that rule what is intelligible and what is not.

The fact that I take this critique of phenomenology does not mean that I consider existential phenomenology dispensable or inferior. As I argue at length in chapter five called: *Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce*; to consider a concept as better or truer than other would implicate that I can judge them from a neutral place. In that sense, it makes more sense to me to evaluate the concepts and the theories in what possibilities/questions/interventions open, so, I focus the attention in what the concepts produce. Furthermore, I think that these different theories are called forth in different contexts and further produce these very contexts.

The existential phenomenological approach helps me to think about how we make sense of our experience; it enables me to think about the nature of my bodily experience and what happens when I attend to it. With poststructural

---

<sup>50</sup> By poststructuralism, drawing on Harcourt (2007), I am referring to the theories that reject the phenomenological notion that meaning is a subjective enterprise. Instead of this, they both draw on and trouble the structuralist understanding that meaning is derived from wider social structures that the subject unconsciously enacts. They are different from structuralism in that they emphasise the spaces of ambiguity and the constant possibility of subversion of the norms. Even if Harcourt (2007) mainly places Foucault in this category, I think that Derrida - with his critique to phenomenology and use of structuralism (Derrida, 1973, 1978, 1997) - and Butler - with her massive use of both Foucault and Derrida - can also be considered under this umbrella.

theories, I am not worried anymore about how to access lived experience as it is lived. Instead, I am wondering about what allowed this particular kind of experience and no other possibilities. Both focuses and inquiries are important and generative to me.

### ***Butler, Foucault and Derrida***

The idea that the 'I' comes later into the picture is strongly put forward by Butler (1997a, 2005, 2006, 2014) – but differently from how phenomenology does it. In an early paper (Butler, 1988), she reflects on how phenomenology – especially in the work of Merleau-Ponty and Simone de Beauvoir – has affinities with feminism because of “a commitment to grounding theory in lived experience, and in revealing the way in which the world is produced through the constituting acts of subjective experience.” (p. 522) Butler agrees with the phenomenological notion that it is the action – embodied and contextual – that is continuously giving shape to a subject.

Nonetheless, what troubles Butler (1988) is the centrality and prevalence of the subject as “a constituting agent prior to language” (p. 519) that sometimes is assumed by phenomenology. Butler clarifies that her approach is different in that it takes the social context – and not a constituting subjectivity – as what makes actions and interpretations intelligible. “There are social contexts and conventions within which certain acts not only become possible but become conceivable as acts at all” (p. 525). With this Butler (1988, 2005) is stressing that social discourses enable certain kinds of experience and actions and make others unintelligible. Subjectivity is no longer a point of departure.

Stoller (2009, 2010) argues that Merleau-Ponty is not that different from Butler. According to the author, Merleau-Ponty is anti-essentialist and for him subjectivity emerges in the action. Furthermore, she argues that Merleau-Ponty posits experience in the world and so it is not ahistorical. What I think that Stoller is missing is the difference between contextualising experience with language, history and culture – as Merleau-Ponty (2012) does – and asserting that culture and language are what makes experience intelligible in

the first place. With Butler (1988, 2005) the cultural dimension gives the conditions of intelligibility so that a particular experience can emerge at all.

In his later work – as in *The History of Sexuality* 2 and 3 – Foucault is directly concerned about subjective experience. He does not take experience as a ground, but wants to study how a particular kind of experience came to be constituted in a specific way.

He is especially concerned about the experience of sexuality. Experience is taken as a product of certain sciences that produce a 'knowledge' of sexuality and certain normativities that put this knowledge to work. Through these cultural discourses and practices – knowledge and normativities – an individual becomes reflexive about themselves in particular ways.

To speak of "sexuality" as a historically singular experience also presupposed the availability of tools capable of analyzing the peculiar characteristics and interrelations of the three axes that constitute it: (1) the formation of sciences (savoirs) that refer to it, (2) the systems of power that regulate its practice, (3) the forms within which individuals are able, are obliged, to recognize themselves as subjects of this sexuality. (Foucault, 1990, p. 4)

As I have mentioned in previous chapters, Butler (2005) takes Foucault's input to stress that how I make myself an object of knowledge to myself – how I am reflexive about myself – is within a historically conditioned form of rationality. Butler distinguishes this gesture from phenomenology that points to a transhistorical subject that would account for all experience and knowledge. She highlights that Foucault thinks about how what we can say about ourselves, the 'authentic' experience that we can have, is dependent on cultural discourses.

So, with phenomenology we would look to see how the subjective experience of sexuality appears – trying to grasp the first-person account as liberated from prejudices as possible. In contrast, with Foucault we would think about the social discourses that are present and structuring the experience of a person and we would look at what possibilities are not permitted to be experienced at all.

There are certain kind of experiences that are intelligible and validated and others that are not or that are pushing to become an intelligible possibility. For example, the different sexual identities and preferences that have emerged in the past years, speak about ways of experiencing sexuality that have slowly come to be recognisable and intelligible for a wider sector of the population.

Foucault and Butler help me to not see experience as foundational and to wonder what social discourses are enabling it and to imagine what is not allowed into speakability. Poststructuralism enables me to critique and to interrogate my experience.

Derrida (Derrida, 1973, 1997) argues that the notion of experience from phenomenology – Husserl’s phenomenology – relates to the notion of a presence that is immediate. “‘Experience’ has always designated the relationship with a presence, whether that relationship had the form of consciousness or not.” (Derrida, 1997, p. 60)

Derrida (1997) argues that this immediate access is not possible because we always access experience through representations<sup>51</sup> that always refer to other representations. Hence, there is a trace that never gets to a finishing point because its meaning is always deferred. “*The trace is in fact the absolute origin of sense in general. Which amounts to saying once again that there is no absolute origin of sense in general. The trace is the differance which opens appearance [l’apparaître] and signification.*” (Derrida, 1997, p. 65)

Therefore, instead of a presence we find an absence and a constant deferral in accessing what was supposed to be directly and transparently grasped. As Spivak (1997) ‘explains’ Derrida’s concepts:

The structure of the sign is determined by the trace or track of that other which is forever absent. This other is of course never to be found in its full being. As even such empirical events as answering a child’s

---

<sup>51</sup> It is relevant to notice that the word representation is used here. This does not mean that Derrida is favouring representationalism as the belief that a representation can directly mirror or stand for something external. “In poststructuralist terms, ‘crisis of representation’ is not the end of representation, but the end of pure presence.” (Lather, 1993, p. 675)

question or consulting the dictionary proclaim, one sign leads to another and so on indefinitely. (Spivak, 1997, p. xvii)

Derrida (1973) argues that if we could capture what is happening in the present moment – as if that could be grasped in that bounded experience – we actually could not have that experience at all. The present moment is always referring to other previous moments – to a trace – that prevents it from the possibility of being self-contained. In that sense, phenomenology is seen as nostalgic because of trying to aim at the impossibility of capturing the pre-reflective experience. Aiming to coincide with oneself when one can only be deferred.

### ***Does poststructuralism bury phenomenology?***

Poststructuralism rejects the main principles of phenomenology. As I have argued, the fact that I integrate these critiques does not mean that I think phenomenology is not useful. It does not mean either that I do not criticise phenomenology. There are concepts that flow from my ontoepistemology, while other concepts are at odds with it in one or more grounds. The concepts brought by phenomenology as the pre-reflective experience, bracketing, consciousness, etc. are definitely contested and reconceptualised or even destroyed by the thoroughly relational ontoepistemology that I embrace. Nonetheless – as I argue in chapter 4: *Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce* – precisely through holding a relational, immanent and productive ontoepistemology, I think that, firstly, the theories and the concepts do not reflect a reality but produce realities. This helps me to think about the uses and productions of the different concepts, rather than assuming that one concept is better or truer than other from a neutral place. The concepts are materialised and operate as an *apparatus* (Barad, 2007) that produces a world. That is, for example, the concept of pre-reflective experience in phenomenology does not reflect how things ‘are’ but does produce a particular way of arranging the world where I am, say, looking to follow my bodily sense of a situation. It is only from these productions – and from my intra-actions with them – that I can see the usefulness of a concept. I cannot claim from a neutral place if they are wrong or correct without assuming that they are mirroring reality. And,



secondly, the concepts do not emerge and acquire significance outside particular intra-actions. In some intra-actions to criticise phenomenology can work to build a critique on the use of experience as a foundation; in other intra-actions to attend to what is considered our felt experience as the fundament of the truth of a situation can be useful to validate someone. I am not the master of what I think and so in different intra-active configurations I can think differently from what I expect or claim and contradict myself in many ways – as I developed in chapter seven: *Betraying our best intentions: using meta-reflexivity with diffraction*.

Taking this last point, for example, we can use poststructural concepts in a foundational manner. Sometimes the drive to deconstruct seems at one time to acknowledge the limitations of subjectivity – in that the person loses its mastery by the overpowering social discourses – and to give the masterfulness back – in believing that we can catch ourselves and see how discourses are working in us, escaping their hold. As Lather says: “To attempt to deconstruct one's own work is to risk buying into the faith in the powers of critical reflection that places emancipatory efforts in such a contradictory position with the poststructuralist foregrounding of the limits of consciousness” (Lather, 1993, p. 685). In fact, the critique to place experience as a foundation could be made to discourse understood as a foundation. Lather (2007) proposes to focus in the limits of reflexivity as a better alternative. Furthermore, maybe sometimes it is just impossible to not enact some foundationalism and that can also enable some movement that later on grants the possibility to challenge our foundational beliefs.

### ***Where does poststructuralism take me?***

Poststructuralism helps me to interrogate my experience – not to try to grasp it as in phenomenology. With poststructuralism, I can question myself and others and I can push the boundaries of intelligibility so that the possibility of allowing other kind of experiences is opened.

There was a text circulating on the internet that was ironically entitled: “I also believe that Catholics should be able to get married”. They were making a parody of how Catholics give their opinion about the moral feasibility of people of the same sex getting married. The text goes on to describe how even if some of the manners and practices of the Catholics might look strange – as to make statues and giant images of a tortured person – they are as much a person as anybody else so that we should just let them get married.

I think that this text works effectively to make the reader aware of how arbitrary it is that some rights are not granted to certain ‘kind’ of people. Butler (1997a) argues that what makes power relatively invulnerable is that it produces the conditions of intelligibility in not explicit or legible ways and so we do not know that it is operating. “The one who speaks according to the norms that govern speakability is not necessarily following a rule in a conscious way. One speaks according to a tacit set of forms that are not always explicitly coded as rules” (p. 134). Interventions like this text that was circulating in internet can bring the not explicit and arbitrary rules into legibility and so into questioning.

In relation to my psychotherapeutic practice, N. Rose (1996) from a Foucauldian perspective, argues that the psy-disciplines through their theory and practice play an important role in creating ways of relating to ourselves, to understand ourselves and to produce ourselves in particular ways. The psy-disciplines act in tandem with social discourses that are ruling a particular society in a determinate moment in history. In that sense, psychotherapy does not help to better represent experience but produces experience.

This perspective, makes me feel that it is imperative that I question psychotherapeutic theories as cultural productions that themselves help to produce the experience of my clients (and myself in the role of the psychotherapist). White (2009), who develops a narrative therapy influenced by Foucault, makes clear that the ways in which we think about how things should be and how we should work on them are culturally enabled. For instance, it has not always been thought that couples should communicate as

the best way to resolve their problems. This perspective highlights that how we think about psychotherapy is not foundational and thus it can be challenged: we can think about it differently.

In the next section, I will explore how experience can be reconceptualised through posthumanism.

### **Experience through posthumanism<sup>52</sup>**

In this section I explore what posthumanism can do to the concept of experience. I develop posthumanism in its particular contributions, articulating how the notion of experience gets resignified in a way that it makes it problematic to say: 'subjective experience' because it would assume a bounded subjectivity with a personal experience.

I bring back poststructural and existential phenomenological understandings showing how they produce experience differently from posthumanism. Posthumanism builds from poststructuralism but its proposal is different. Posthumanism brings the attention to how social reality and subjectivity concretely materialises itself in ever-shifting ways. This brings an emphasis on the body and materiality in general (Blackman, Cromby, Hook, Papadopoulos, & Walkerdine, 2008). To me, this entails a renewed attention to bodily affective experience that was neglected by poststructuralism in its rejection of phenomenology.

In a way, posthumanism goes beyond the criticisms of the phenomenological notion of experience to propose new conceptualisations of experience that move away from the notion of 'subjective experience', to think about experience in an impersonal manner. Braidotti (2018) emphasises that posthumanism pushes for affirmative and positive projects of how subjects

---

<sup>52</sup> By posthumanism, I am referring to the theories that trouble the boundedness of the human not only in discursive terms but also in material terms. Author like Barad and Deleuze and Guattari can be considered exponents of this stream (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012b; Mazzei, 2013; Murris & Bozalek, 2019). Nonetheless, as Braidotti (2018) makes evident there are many different ways to refer to this tendency. I prefer the term posthumanism because it highlights how the notion of the human is decentred.

might become otherwise. “Poststructuralism paved the way for this approach, but the posthuman turn materializes it and composes a new ontological framework of becoming-subjects” (Braidotti, 2018, p. 3). Poststructuralism has provided the possibility of bringing into question what was assumed as the nature of subjectivity and posthumanism bring this project further by focusing in how we might become.

### ***Some of the news that posthumanism brings***

In general terms, posthumanism, through the work of Barad (2007), Deleuze and Guattari (1987; 1983, 1994) and some authors that are drawing on them<sup>53</sup>, argue for a decentring of the subject and human experience. Instead of conceiving a bounded individuality, they think that what we understand as a person and their experience is in constant process of emerging through material and cultural forces which include the human and the non-human. More to the point, the subject is not beyond these forces, it is an arrangement of these forces.

This conceptualisation that decentres subjectivity forces us to conceive experience differently. Through existential phenomenology I refer to a subject – even if the subject is intersubjective – and an object. The notion of consciousness as intentional – which is shared by all the phenomenological authors – implies that there is not a relational matrix always in process of being shaped as with posthumanism. Instead, intentionality, even if it states that the consciousness and the objects are born together, implies a more dichotomic – dialectical – understanding: what appears is consciousness on one side and

---

<sup>53</sup> As I have mentioned in the Methodology chapter. Hein (2016) differentiates Barad from Deleuze, arguing that Barad is not proposing immanence but transcendence because her concept of intra-action is already an identity, so she does not start from positive difference as Deleuze does through the concept of the virtual. I find more resonance with Murris and Bozalek (2019) who argue that both, Barad and Deleuze, have a relational ontology and that Barad does think of everything, including space and time, as constantly produced (aligning with a positive difference) and not pre-existent. Importantly, they bring to attention that a methodology aligned with a relational ontology would not try to put the texts or the authors against each other – leaving one of the terms wanting – but would be attentive to see what is produced when they are read through each other.

its objects on the other. Consciousness and its objects appear as differentiated and complementary opposed. Merleau-Ponty (2012) and Gendlin (1973) put forward a more relational phenomenology but they are still foregrounding a consciousness – even if it is embodied – that perceives.<sup>54</sup> With poststructuralism, I refer to how the social discourses enable a subjective experience. With posthumanism, I think that both these movements (phenomenology and poststructuralism) are proposing some kind of causality and are privileging a term over the other. Specifically, in poststructuralism the discursive dimension over the material, and in existential phenomenology the subject or consciousness over the object. With posthumanism, I trouble these dichotomies; I think that experience does not belong to a subject and I think that experience is produced through material-discursive practices – that is, that the material is already discursive and the other way around. (Barad, 2003, 2007)

Furthermore, differently from existential phenomenology that brings back the subject as already ‘in ‘the-world; posthumanism, does not think of the world as a container of units, instead, we are *part* of the world – producing it in every intra-action. Through posthumanism the material non-human is not only passive and signified by humans but has its own strength as part of the arrangement (Barad, 2007). This conceptualisation might hopefully produce a sense of responsibility with the world that we are becoming with. The conceptualisation of a subject separated from the material might have facilitated that we relate to the Earth as an object for our ‘benefit’<sup>55</sup>.

---

<sup>54</sup> Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) latter work ‘The visible and the invisible’ accounts for this deficit in his major work ‘The Phenomenology of Perception’. Merleau-Ponty considers that he remained within the dichotomy subject-object. Merleau-Ponty (1968) also considers that the notion of pre-reflective assumes that there can be an experience without language. Because of this he considers phenomenology as nostalgically desiring to do the impossible: to go back to a ‘primordial experience’.

<sup>55</sup> Interestingly, Haraway (2016), along these lines argues “Philosophically and materially, I am a compostist, not a posthumanist. Critters—human and not—become-with each other, compose and decompose each other, in every scale and register of time and stuff in sympoietic tangling, in ecological evolutionary developmental earthly worlding and unworlding.” (Haraway, 2016, p. 97)

Taking Barad's (2007) lead, Murris and Bozalek (2019, p. 875) say: "Brittle stars are of the world, not 'in' it, but part of the world – like all other organisms and matter". This means that no-body is self-contained but always part of something broader that it is continuously taking shape.

Bodies (including human and more than human bodies) are unbounded quantum entanglements constituted by concepts and material forces, where the social, the political, the biological, and their observing, measuring and controlling machines are interwoven and entwined. (Murris & Bozalek, 2019, p. 876)

In this panorama, the boundaries of any entity are always emergent and not definite. Murris and Bozalek (2019) argue that both Barad and Deleuze have a relational ontology that starts from positive difference in Deleuzian terms, and with intra-action in Barad's terms. That is, what is actualised does not start from a previous essence or identity as distinct from others. Instead, any-body is actualised from productive differences *within* that through a process of differentiating produce an actualised identity. This ontology produces that the possibility of speaking of a subject and their experience gets challenged.

### ***Subjectivity and affective experience***

Using Deleuzian vocabulary, any identity is unstable, always part of a greater and ever-shifting assemblage; what makes something an identity is a territorialisation that is always liable to be deterritorialised or reterritorialised.

Every body, object, idea, subjectivity or other relation is consequently a territory, produced and fought over by rival affects within assemblages (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988). When an affect territorializes a body's desire, it shapes the potential for that body to affect other relations in the assemblage. (Fox & Alldred, 2013, p. 773)

This different ontology produces a different way of thinking about subjectivity. It would not be coherent of thinking about bounded individuals that 'have' an experience as with phenomenology. The concept of *affect*, then emerges as a more suitable possibility.

Affect can be a notion of experience that responds to the critiques of transparency, essentialism, and humanism. Affect does not speak of *my*

experience, affect speaks about something impersonal that can be taken up – folded in – and in this movement, creates an interiority, a ‘me’, an ‘I’. Affect is not subjective, affect can create subjectivity, subjectivity is a production, subjectivity is ontologically secondary.

The concept of affect has been put forward from Spinoza and Bergson to Deleuze and Guattari. Affect, in this conceptualisation, does not refer to an emotion or an individual affective state that can be readily described. In contrast, it is about the non-personal increase – or diminution – of the bodily capacity to act and be affected (Clough & Halley, 2007). Affect does not belong to a bounded subjectivity because it moves across subjectivities (Williams, 2010). Affect – as an impersonal affective experience that passes through subjectivities – continuously produces (or territorialises) what we consider a subjectivity.

This establishes a fundamental difference of focus between anthropocentric and anti-humanist ontologies: between exploring the social interactions of active, sense-making human agents and mapping impersonal affective flows and territorializations within assemblages. (Fox & Alldred, 2013, p. 774)

The notion of the fold put forward by Deleuze (2006) becomes relevant to how we are to think about subjective experience. The assumed ‘interiority’ is not essential but produced in a process of folding of the ‘external’ or social; so, it is the movement done through folding what actually produces an interiority and an exteriority, a subjective experience and a social world. This also entails that what is ‘internal’ cannot be thought apart from the social; that is, subjective experience is continuously produced in connection with the social.

Furthermore, according to Massumi (1995), affect is autonomous because it is part of the Deleuzian ‘virtual’. That is, it is real but it has not been actualised in a particular possibility: it is what enables these actualisations. When it is actualised, it can be transformed in an emotion that captures an intensity. Nonetheless, this capture is always incomplete and something remains not actualised. The emotion that we experience is an actualisation coming from a

virtual net, wider and more entrenched than what we could ever grasp with our understanding. “That is why all emotion is more or less disorienting, and why it is classically described as being outside oneself, at the very point at which one is most intimately and unshareably in contact with oneself and one’s vitality.” (Massumi, 1995, p. 96)

The concept of affect, then, makes of the intimacy and privacy of an emotional experience something that is already beyond and ‘outside’ of us. Put it in another way, there is not intimacy or centre of experience that is separable from an ‘outside’ that is beyond them. Furthermore – and this explains the quotations marks in the word ‘outside’ – the very possibility of an intimate ‘internal’ emotional experience is given by a folding in of affect.

In this ontology, there are not previously defined individuals or subjects that then engage in affections, but the affect in its movement produces subjectivity. Thus, the feeling of interiority, of an intimate world, is relationally constituted and not essential. More to the point, when we elaborate or work-through affect, we do not make meaning of something individual that was already there inside us. We do not precede affect because our constitution is not separated from it. In taking up an affect and elaborating it in a meaningful sensation or emotion, we – as subjects – are constantly made.

Becoming-self is one of the ways in which this folding expresses itself, but never toward a totalization of self – always toward continued individuation. Self is a modality – a singularity – on the way toward new foldings. These foldings bring into appearance not a fully constituted human, already-contained, but co-constitutive strata of matter, content, form, substance and expression. The self is not contained. (Manning, 2009, p. 35)

This way of thinking about the subject as always in state of becoming through folding grants greater movement and elasticity to articulate what happens in any relationship. There is not an essentially differentiated ‘you’ and ‘me’ but a movement that constantly produces me and my experience and you and your experience. As Gale (2016) conveys:



As our thoughts, feelings, and values, expressed in utterances and the movements of our bodies, are folded in to establish territorial distances, the thoughts, feelings, and values of others intra-act, combine, and exchange with them in rhythmic response, allowing new utterances to emerge and new meanings to unfold. (Gale, 2016, p. 306)

I think posthumanism reconceptualises experience as affect, as not belonging to an individual because the boundaries of subjectivities are always shifting. For instance, the concept of voice is no longer understood as coming from an accountable bounded subject with an individual experience (Jackson & Mazzei, 2012a, 2012b, 2017; Mazzei, 2013, 2016). Mazzei (2013) mainly drawing on (Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) and Barad (2007) posits that voice does not belong to an organism but emerges from a becoming that includes all of what is relating at that moment, human and non-human. Voice is always part of a greater *assemblage* of human and non-human.

In the model that Jackson and Mazzei (2017) are proposing, voice is not expression, voice is made in an assemblage that is always in process. What has the power of producing is not an intentional subject on the backstage but a material and discursive intra-action that makes things real and meaningful.

I think this opens the scope to think about making sense of oneself not as an intentional or masterful activity but as a production of a whole assemblage or intra-action. When 'I' try to articulate what I am experiencing now, this 'I' and this 'experience' is produced through a whole assemblage, material and discursive, that produces me and my experience in a particular way.

The notion of subjective experience goes out of the picture with posthumanism because experience as affect is not personal. This is the intersection where I bring my contribution using my intra-action (with) the three traditions and my psychoanalytic background, to still think about subjective experience: an experience that feels mine and intimate and in which I 'find' myself but in non-essentialist and non-foundational terms. I think of subjective experience in coherence with posthumanism because I think of a becoming subjectivity more than a bounded subjectivity.

## **Re-thinking about subjective experience: Is there still space for it?**

The posthumanist way of thinking about subjectivity and experience dismantles subjectivity and experience as they are usually understood: a bounded subjectivity that has particular experiences. I think that for Deleuze and Guattari (1983) this dominant understanding would be akin to a molar assemblage. For the authors, molar assemblages stratify and organise in a way that fixes; whereas molecular assemblages do not have a set meaning but just production.

Although molecular and molar flows of affect are both productive, the former deterritorializes: opening up possibilities for what bodies can do and desire, and may produce a line of flight (Deleuze and Guattari, 1988) from a stable state or identity, while the latter imposes order, reterritorializes and defines what bodies can and cannot do. (Fox & Alldred, 2013, p. 773)

However, I will propose that we can think about subjectivity not in terms of a fixed identity: “this is how I am” “this is my experience”, but as a becoming that can constantly surprise us. This implies a reconceptualisation of the term subjectivity from how it has been understood.

As is well known, Deleuze and Guattari rarely use the concept of subjectivity and when they do it is mostly in a negative way: Subjectivity for Deleuze and Guattari is a molar event, a closure against the process of singular individuation and molecular becoming. (Blackman et al., 2008, p. 15)

In this panorama, I do not own ‘my’ experience – it is not mine – it becomes through me and I become through it. With this articulation, I go to a place where the subject in itself tends to dilute – at least the subject that I am used to think about. I think this is what posthumanism does. When existential phenomenology insists that the world and the subject emerge together, so that one cannot exist or be understood without the other, I still sustain a sense of subjectivity – an emergent, embodied and situated subjectivity – but a subjectivity where the sense of self and continuity does not disappear. With existential phenomenology, the sense of identity is troubled in intersubjective grounds – for example, with Sartre (2015) we think that we start being reflexive

and accountable through another. Crucially, in this understanding myself and the other are, to a certain extent, bounded and distinguishable among ourselves and among all the social and material reality around us. In this sense, the sense of identity is troubled but not to an extent of blurring the very possibility of a bounded identity. Through the poststructural conceptualisation subjectivity is permeated and spoken through. Subjectivity is produced by wider discourses. Nonetheless, we are still very concerned about subjectivity. With posthumanism, subjectivity gets more radically decentred in that it loses its centrality. "To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I." (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 3)

In spite of this, in what follows, I work with posthumanism towards reconceptualising the notion of an experience that feels personal and intimate, *my* experience, a subjective experience. For elaborating this reconceptualisation I use the three traditions that I have explored and also my psychoanalytic background. I concern myself with the reconceptualisation of subjective experience, that is, an experience that 'belongs to me', where I can 'find' myself and have a sense of intimacy with myself. Even when the notion of subjective experience has essentialist and foundationalist tones, I look to reconceptualise it conceiving it as a becoming that goes beyond what we can control.

### ***Finding ourselves in losing ourselves***

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) articulate:

We can no longer even speak of distinct machines, only of types of interpenetrating multiplicities that at any given moment form a single machinic assemblage, the faceless figure of the libido. Each of us is caught up in an assemblage of this kind, and we reproduce its statements when we think we are speaking in our own name; or rather we speak in our own name when we produce its statement. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 36)

In this last phrase, I get to the refreshing understanding that it is not only that subjectivity gets decentred but that subjectivity and the sense of identity is

produced *within* this decentring. This last phrase provokes me to think that our everyday experience of continuity and identity is enabled – rather than just decentred – by the assemblage of different forces.

It's a strange business, speaking for yourself, in your own name, because it doesn't at all come with seeing yourself as an ego or a person or a subject. Individuals find a real name for themselves, rather, only through the harshest exercise in depersonalization, by opening themselves up to the multiplicities everywhere within them, to the intensities running through them. (Deleuze, 1995, p. 6)

In the movie: *Call me by your name* (Guadagnino, 2017), Elio, the principal character, finds the book: *The cosmic fragments* by Heraclitus which has a note written by Oliver, his lover, that reads: “the meaning of the river flowing is not that all things are changing so that we cannot encounter them twice, but that some things stay the same only by changing”. The river continues to be alive as a river only by changing. I stay alive and present as Karen only by becoming otherwise.

Manning (2014) explores into how movement outruns the subject. The author insists that it is not the subject the one that is leading. Let's take the case of dancing. She highlights how some choreographers do not ask the dancer to achieve a specific figure but to be in contact with the movement in the figure and to move in synchronization with it. It is an action, not a representation; a verb, not a noun. Manning believes that this quality of no fixation arouses a kind of wonder. To me, if we take wonder as curiosity, the fact that the dancer needs to follow a movement beyond herself can make her wonder where it is going. In contrast, if we have a set of pre-established figures – no improvisation whatsoever – the question does not have space to emerge, the subject is concentrated in performing in a specific and already given way. I am doing this choreography. The *I* does not have the chance to be fluid, to be emergent. She says: “A wonder not of a subject (not ‘my’ wonder) but a wondering in movement (a wonder that moves the me I am becoming)” (p. 165). Following this, I do not possess or control the process that is being enacted: this process is making me.

As Manning (2014) articulates:

It is not 'I' as self-enclosed subject who is creating movement, but movement itself that is in the process of recalibrating an 'I' that will eventually emerge, unmoored. Not 'I am wondering' but 'Where does this movement wonder me?' A body is never in advance of its moving. (p. 167)

I think that Manning (2014) places great emphasis here in how the subject gets outrun: going beyond the subject, exceeding identity. But what about the sense of intimacy, the sensation of finding oneself that can be given in those moments of surrender to something wider. I would like to draw attention to the feeling of familiarity or me-ness that can be felt when letting go to something wider that we cannot control. It reminds me of the existential phenomenological idea that we get to a familiarity with ourselves not through our reflective consciousness but through the embodied action in-the-world. This embodied action can feel as wider than us because it is outside our conscious efforts. It is through allowing this surrender to what is beyond my conscious efforts, that I find something that feels true, alive. I do not know where the movement wonders me, but it gets me just exactly where I was hoping. The paradox must not be resolved (Winnicott, 1953). Writing without knowing what I am saying, until the words write themselves. My body and the music in a connection that leads me beyond me and at the same time brings me to some intimacy with myself. A sense of me that I discover anew while feeling that it was meant to be just like that. Finding in pre-reflective experience a me-ness as with existential phenomenology. For Heidegger, "I am acquainted with myself when I am captured and captivated by the world." (Zahavi 2003, 164). However, this me-ness is not foundational; it is emergent and ever-shifting even if it feels like a discovery. The notion of finding a foundation in the pre-reflective experience may be related to the sensation of finding something that was there only waiting to be awakened. Nonetheless, what appears as me-ness is an emergent that only has the chance to appear by allowing the movement to breathe through me. I only find myself (as emergent, as becoming) in losing myself.

I do not believe that this finding oneself is discovering a previous essence – something mine and foundational. I find myself in other, in process, in movement, in contact, because I am through and through a contextual and relational movement. Maybe I am a way of resonating. A way of being with others/places/movements. The way in which I am resonating cannot be thought about in isolation.

This brings to mind Davies and Gannon's (2013) work where they play with new forms of making sense of oneself through collective biographies. In these exercises, is not about recalling 'veridically' our memories and stories, but about how people *make* sense – articulate and re-articulate – their narratives in a bodily way in intra-action with other people, feelings, interpretations, landscapes, material arrangements, etc.

The way in which they work is trying to write their memories not relying on explanations or common places but to be faithful to a wording that expresses the nuances of the embodied sensations. They say: "We work collaboratively to find those words that express the embodied sensations that make up the memory. The assembled researchers listen intently to each other's spoken and written memories in order to know them *from inside themselves*" (Davies & Gannon, 2013, p. 359). This way of working could have been directly taken from *focusing oriented psychotherapy* (Gendlin, 1981, 1997b), that I mentioned in the existential phenomenology section.

Davies and Gannon (2013) do not believe that they are capturing the essence of the experience; instead, they think that something emerges in the intra-action that feels right. In Gendlin's terms (Gendlin, 1964, 1968, 1981, 1997a, 2004) it would amount to say that there was not a hidden experience fully formed that got explicated, but that the experience emerges – it takes shape – in the relational context (in the relational/social/material assemblage in posthumanist terms). There is a symbolic articulation that feels right because it emerges from an attention to the felt sense that is not bounded to an

individual. It is this articulation what is able to move the felt sense and so to activate a process of becoming differently.

I find interesting how Davies and Gannon's (2013) way of working with collective biographies plays with both the *intimacy* of personal experience and the intra-active becoming in the narrative as it gets shaped by an intra-action and not by a masterful subject.

The original holder of the memory writes and rewrites the memory in light of this collaborative attention to the detail until, with a collective sigh, or with tears, the assembled memory-workers say—yes, that is it exactly—we know this moment from inside itself. That is, the memory begins to register and resonate affectively in the bodies of the listeners. The memory-story is, in this moment, both intensely real and de-individualised. (Davies & Gannon, 2013, p. 360)

I like how they do not shy away from relying in a bodily sense of what feels right and correct as “this is my story” “this is hers/his/theirs story”. I think that their identity gets (also) affirmed in the process. Paradoxically, by becoming undone in the group, in the space, in the collective feelings, there can be a different – but affirmative – sense of selfhood. It is not about negating subjectivity but about seeing it thoroughly relational in a way that I am not that worried anymore about ‘myself’ as individual because I connect with a broader and movable sense of myself. I find myself – as becoming – in losing myself – as fixed identity.

### ***Affect: a collective sense of intimacy***

To continue developing this notion of subjective experience as a becoming that brings surprise and novelty; a subjective experience that does not depend on the notion of a bounded subjectivity, the concept of affect is useful. Massumi (1995) speaks about intensity or affect. Affect as intensity is different from emotion. Emotion would be a qualified intensity, one that has been owned<sup>56</sup>. Affect is a bodily event that starts before one is conscious of it. “Will and

---

<sup>56</sup> This resonates with the psychoanalytic theory of Bion. Specifically, with the Bionian concept of O and evolved O; where O or the infinite is that can be felt but not known and moves everything else, and an evolved O is where O has evolved to be apprehendable by K or knowledge. (Bion, 1970)

consciousness are subtractive. They are limitative, derived functions which reduce a complexity too rich to be functionally expressed” (Massumi, 1995, p. 90). In that sense, affect goes beyond a singular consciousness and will; there is a certain autonomy of it. “Affect is autonomous to the degree to which it escapes confinement in the particular body whose vitality, or potential for interaction, it is.” (Massumi, 1995, p. 96)

The concept of affect can be related to the conceptualisation of thoughts in Bion’s theory (Bion, 1962a, 1970). The author, coming from psychoanalysis and concerned with psychotherapy and the capacity to work-through feelings; proposes that thoughts are impersonal and ask to be thought – to be elaborated – by subjectivities. With Bion, I think of thoughts as not belonging to a person and with power to impact.

It is not often enough recognized that a patient in whom resistance is active can be reacting against what he feels to be a thought in search of a thinker. It is supposedly his own thought (classical resistance theory), but it does not have to be so. (Bion, 1970, p. 117)

This finds a strong resonance with the concept of affect (Williams, 2010) as an impersonal force to affect and be affected that is continuously shaping self-states and subjectivities in its movement.

In this way, affects are best understood as transitive states through which bodies pass, they meander through and between bodies, resting like ‘foreign objects’, or excessive impersonal forces, awaiting transformation into the thought-imbued emotions of subjective experience. (Williams, 2010, p. 251)

This can almost have been taken out of one of Bion’s texts. Thought/affect – as I have decided to call it to connect both conceptualisations – is an impersonal force that seeks a subjectivity to be elaborated. Bion (1962a, 1962b) articulates that *beta elements* are raw sensations bodily felt that need to be transformed in *alpha elements* that are the basis for thinking. This is done through the alpha function where the beta elements – raw sensations, unconnected images, etc. – are contained and processed to transform them in alpha elements that can be thought and so developing our apparatus for thinking. Similarly, affect is a force that goes around and within bodies



‘transmitting’ images and intensities that are taken up by subjects that can process them by a folding movement through which they also continuously form their subjectivities. (Williams, 2010)

For instance, I am in therapy with a client and I sense some vague uneasiness that I attend to without rushing to grasp what it means. Through this, I let the sensation evolve to be defined as a feeling of unrealness and I get the sense that there is something going on in the relationship that we are avoiding. I think about this process in this way: there was something happening beyond myself – “a thought in search of a thinker” (Bion, 1970, p. 117) – and I was able to pay attention to it to let it be processed and formed ‘in me’, producing myself and the situation in this movement. In that way, there is a subjective experience, but it is an experience – as affect/thought – that is emerging through a wider arrangement of different forces and produces me as a subjectivity. However, paradoxically, I do feel it as *my experience*.

The concept of affect can feel connecting to me. There is a freshness and an aliveness in not being bounded but part of a becoming assemblage. From a first-person point of view (that I do not possess, that is necessarily temporal and that is always becoming otherwise), it feels enlivening to make contact with something that goes beyond the boundaries (more or less stratified) of my subjectivity. This that goes beyond the boundaries of myself is what it is *outside* (Deleuze, 2006), where outside is not part of the usual distinction inside/outside where each term is defined in a dialectical relation to the other. Instead, outside is what produces an inside in the folding movement. It feels vitalising to intra-act with the outside that has the power to recreate my very subjectivity anew. The fact that affect is impersonal, wider and out of our control, grants the possibility of becoming differently.

*Things* bring novelty and liveness when they are in constant processes of becoming otherwise. But if something, let’s say a subjectivity, closes off within itself, staying stratified for too long and becoming a molar subjectivity (Deleuze

& Guattari, 1983), then, what is needed is to open it up to connections. The possibility to deterritorialise as to allow a line of flight and become otherwise.

I see the staying stratified for too long as being fixed as a bounded human not connecting outside (Deleuze, 2006) oneself and becoming differently through that. Feeling bounded as a centred subjectivity with its old tunes. The repetitive feelings and thoughts that sometimes make me feel tired of myself. I relate it to the sensation of being trapped inside myself, inside my head. In contrast, connecting to something wider and losing myself I can become otherwise: becoming music, becoming dance, becoming laughter, becoming cry, becoming love.

I remember being in a concert a few years ago, it was a big one, I cannot recall who was playing. I was there. I was in the concert. I was standing there wanting to be permeated by music, wanting to stop feeling myself, to stop being aware of me. Tired of me. Wanting to be part of the music. The music was vibrating inside my chest, in my heart. Was it the rhythm of the music or my heartbeats?

Before that, as a child, I went to a concert with my mum, and I realised that music has this power of actually getting into my body. I felt the loud music in my heart. The beat of the music vibrating in my heartbeat. I was holding hands with my mom. I told her: 'mom, I can feel the beat in my heart'. Affect (Massumi, 1995) is that which is personally felt but I do not master because it goes beyond myself; it is collective/connective.

I am aware that I have portrait affect in a very positive manner, as something that can bring novelty, connection and transformation. However, importantly, as Murray (2017, 2019) makes clear, affect not only has positive productions, affect can impulse us to act in compulsive, repetitive and life-draining activities. The affect that courses through us, making us prone to act with certain intensity and in certain ways – constantly producing us in that movement – can also get us stuck to habits and beliefs systems that we would rather avoid as shopping on Amazon (Murray, 2019) or watching pornography in a compulsive

way (Murray, 2017). In that way, I think that poststructuralism with its critical distance from experience as produced by wider cultural discourses can help us to engage more critically with the experience that is breathing through us and taking us to different places that might not be enabling.

### ***A different conceptualisation of subjective experience***

While writing this thesis – finishing this thesis – a crisis erupted in my country, Chile. Multitudes of people went onto the streets with their saucepans making a noise that gets into your bones to claim for their rights, for the profound inequalities and for a series of governments that have treated Chile as a multinational enterprise. I plugged into (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Deleuze & Guattari, 1983) this movement. This affect took on me. I felt elation, rage, boldness, circulating through my body in a way that felt way beyond myself. It connected with my own memories of abuse of power on behalf of my father. The images populated my head. I broke into anger towards my father. I feel myself differently. I stand on my two feet. I cannot eat well and I have nightmares seeing all the abuse of power in my country. We are awakening and we are braver. I am becoming otherwise. My country is becoming otherwise.

This experience made me feel like finding myself in losing myself, it made me feel in contact with something very wild ‘in’ myself that was also collective and connective. I felt this, as existential phenomenology grants, outside a thematic and explicit awareness; I found myself feeling like this. This process of finding myself as already bodily involved is akin to the notion of pre-reflective experience. With the existential phenomenological notion of pre-reflective experience, we find ourselves in the world in a bodily manner, without needing a thematic awareness or a cognitive and reflective grasp. Similarly, experience as affect is felt and lived. As Massumi (1995) insists with his notion of affect, verbal consciousness is always subtractive of a much more intricate bodily experience. However, I think that the pre-reflective experience could be better understood as affect – as this power to affect and be affected that moves

beyond the boundaries of bounded subjectivities. Pre-reflective experience as affect does not belong to a subjectivity but can be taken up by one subjectivity – that is also paradoxically shaped in this very action. In this manner, pre-reflective experience is not – only – something to be grasped, but has the power to create the very ‘observer’ that wants to ‘express’ it. In that way, experience as affect takes a much more active role, it is not there waiting to be articulated but has a strength on its own; it also takes a much more collective tone, it is not my experience but an experience that goes through me, shaping me in that movement.

The way in which experience as affect is taken up by a subject is not the masterful creation of that subject – this is apparent if we remember that affect in its foldings creates and re-creates subjectivities. The way in which experience as affect is taken up is given by material-discursive practices (Barad, 2007) and by relational configurations – this at one time decentres and shapes the subject.

With this panorama of a subject in constant process of emergence and reshaping, when we make sense or reflect about our experience – as affect – we are also producing ourselves. This production is not from a masterful subjectivity but as part of a greater intra-action or assemblage. The process of making sense of our experience cannot be just rational; we need to follow blindly our bodily sensations as how Merleau-Ponty (2012) and Gendlin (1981, 1997a) advise, and to articulate from there. If, on the contrary, we do it rationally; looking for what we already expect to find – not allowing ourselves to be taken – then there is more a reproduction of the same than an openness to be nurtured and transformed by what goes beyond the more or less stratified boundaries of my subjectivity. As Massumi (1995) says, if language as linearity is put to make sense of affect it dampens it – we feel less alive – and no further growth or transformation can be produced there.

Importantly, with poststructuralism, to follow our experience from our bodily intricacy is not the only way to relate to experience; to relate to our experience

wondering about the cultural discourses that make it intelligible becomes crucial if we want to be able to question and challenge the cultural orders that keep things in place reproducing injustice and stagnation.

In this conceptualisation of experience, the worry is not as in phenomenology about the possibility of capturing 'pure' experience. Instead, the worry is how we are going to relate to experience as affect in a way that allow us to continue moving and transforming – because we are following affect: something that goes beyond ourselves and has the power of creating and re-creating ourselves anew. This notion of affect has an affinity with how Heidegger stresses the importance to follow life or to be close to it (Zahavi, 2003). Experience as affect is about the dynamisms and creativity of life in constant process of production and we can plug into it and be moved by it. We can also insist in staying in our own private ground: keeping ourselves safe from surprises. Nonetheless, without our ground being opened to the *outside* (Deleuze, 2006) it gets drier and more static; lacking the continuous rhythm of the beating life. However, this also requires the critical engagement that poststructuralism is so good at because we need to judge where affect is taking us; affect is not intrinsically enabling, it can also lead us to, say, reproduce conditions of exploitation when, for example, I just go along shopping at Primark.

This notion of experience gives quite a different perspective from the existential phenomenological image of a subject trying to express their experience as transparently as possible and from the poststructural image of a subject with a critical distance of their experience because they know that their experience is not individual but socially produced. I feel the first manner tight and controlled and the second distant and suspicious. The third posthumanist image of a subject moved by and shaped by an impersonal affect feels dynamic and vertiginous; it is in this one where experience starts to have a movement on its own, the head of the subject-King is cut, experience has a strength and sense-making has a strength; there is not a dialect of

subject over experience or the other way around. Experience moves the subject and the subject moves the experience. Experience is not of a subject, the hierarchy of the subject-King needs to surrender to the collectivity. The reconceptualisation of subjective experience that I propose takes this posthumanist version of experience but with two different turns. First, I emphasise that this decentring can also enable a production of identity and intimacy. I find myself in losing myself; I am 'more' myself letting go of myself. And second, I argue that the other two images (from existential phenomenology and from poststructuralism) are still active and productive; what is more, these other two ways of relating to (and so producing) experience are needed. I also need to articulate what I am feeling as coming from my experience, and I need to do it as existential phenomenology advises, close to the felt experience and attempting not to interpose many preconceptions. Following Gendlin (1968, 1981, 1997a), it is this way of relating to experience what makes experience be worked-through, be processed. I also need to critically examine my experience as culturally enabled so that I can push beyond the routes that hegemonic material-discursive practices affectively draw me on.

## **Conclusion**

To a certain extent the theories that I have used have been created on the ruins of the previous ones. Posthumanism over poststructuralism over phenomenology. I believe that the central place that phenomenology gave to experience was contested by poststructuralism that was suspicious of experience and I think that posthumanism was able to take experience again but decentring it from a bounded subjectivity. Coherently with my methodology this does not mean a linear development that discards the previous developments as useless. If we would believe this we would think about the concepts as reflections of the world and we would be 'back' to 'before' phenomenology. As I have said, using Barad (2007), I see the concepts as

ways of relating – as apparatuses – that produce the delimitations that make particular worlds.

Nonetheless, the fact that I use posthumanism to think about my methodology speaks about where my academic ground is. What allows me to use theories that I also criticise without being just incoherent is that I am not ‘following’ them, I am *using* them, I am *playing* with them. I think of the concepts as apparatuses that through intra-acting (with) ‘me’ – at this moment – produce the following:

With the apparatus of existential phenomenology, the *agential cut* (Barad, 2007) creates a reflective subjectivity, a pre-reflective experience and objects in the world. Through the apparatus of existential phenomenology, I can use my experience as a ground that I try to follow and express as closely as I can to the felt bodily experience, bracketing my assumptions as much as possible. This can be almost vital when I need to express how I am feeling. It does not help me to question the cultural underpinnings that make this experience possible and forecloses other possibilities. It does not help me to decentre subjectivity, as the notion of affect does, through thinking that experience does not belong to neither my reflective nor my pre-reflective consciousness, because it just passes through me; in contrast, with existential phenomenology I can reflectively find myself in my pre-reflective experiences. With phenomenology, I try to bracket my assumptions because I am an established subjectivity with assumptions that need bracketing. With affect the worry about the need of bracketing does not appear, the assumptions are not ‘mine’. With affect I am forced to let go of me; with phenomenology, I need to keep myself under scrutiny.

With the apparatus of poststructuralism, the agential cut creates an experience that is not particular of a subject, instead experience is enabled culturally. Poststructuralism produces a subject that is spoken through. A subject that is invited to push the limits of intelligibility and become otherwise. Poststructuralism helps me to question my experience, not to take it as something that needs attention in itself but as a product of wider cultural

discourses. It allows me to contest the discourses that also enable my very existence – as I can currently imagine it. With this movement, the possibility of becoming otherwise is opened with the ontological risk that this places.

With the apparatus of posthumanism, the agential cut produces an impersonal affect which creates subjectivities through folding itself. This subjectivity is decentred in its very intimacy. I can be aware of what affect as power to act is passing through me; how in particular situations I can feel more enlivened, angered, depleted, and so on, and think about this feeling not as personal but as collective and impersonal; an affect that goes beyond me and that shapes my possibilities to act in that moment. Affect helps me to feel paradoxically undone and connected.

These three different conceptualisations and productions do not need to stay in their own terrains clearly bounded from each other. Subjective experience gets deconstructed by poststructuralism and made inviable by posthumanism because there is no bounded subjectivity. I brought back the concept of subjective experience in a renewed way in a way that used the three traditions and also my psychoanalytic background. I thought that there is still space for speaking about a subjective experience even with the decentring of posthumanism because I think of the subject as becoming and not as bounded. We find ourselves in losing ourselves and there is still a sense of the intimacy of subjective experience even when it is, paradoxically, conceived as collective. This brought forth my conceptualisation of subjective experience that retains the sense of identity that existential phenomenology is so good at providing by following the stream of lived experience, understanding that this experience does not belong to me but it is collective as the posthumanist notion of affect grants; which makes it possible that I feel in contact with both something wider and with myself when letting go to my experience as affect. Nonetheless, experience as affect can take me to reproduce social dynamics that I would rather avoid and to collude in reproducing dominant discourses foreclosing the possibilities of alternative forms of life and understanding.



Because of this, I argue for the need of the critical awareness that poststructuralism provides to interrogate our experience.

## **Chapter 8: Overall Conclusions**



Conclusions sound a bit daunting. I imagine that I am replying to the question: So, what have you done with your research? And I, sitting at my University allocated desk, with bits of food around, the warmth of the heating just besides me, with the cold, wet and dark day awaiting through the window, with my supervisors, Jonathan and Liz, always somehow present in my writing and my thinking, with my colleagues typing, browsing, sometimes laughing and sharing thoughts and food and coffee, with the material-discursive practices of this University, with the written feedback from my supervisors, with my vulnerability, my strength, my decisiveness, my sharpness, my disorientation, my wanting, my need, my little miseries, with the people that I love, that I struggle to love, that I cannot but love, with the social movements that engage me, with the examiners that will read this, with my body, with my way of moving and with all of the uncountable things that are intra-acting (with) me now, I articulate an answer.

It does not come right away, I feel anxious. What am I doing in articulating an answer? Am I pinning down things? Am I reducing them? Am I fixing them? Do I make myself for 'you', the one that asks me what have I done? I worry about that, but I feel that I need to give an answer to move something, to ground something else, to use my thesis, to use my thesis in the Winnicottian sense (Winnicott, 1971). Maybe until now it has been my transitional object, me and not-me at the same time, making me able to play and to imagine, to keep thinking. Now, it is different, I edit it, I finish it, I conclude it. My thesis, my production goes beyond myself. Because I pronounce its conclusions and submit it to let it be an entity in itself that will intra-act with others, it gains its proper existence beyond myself and then I can *use* it.

So, making sense of ourselves: how to think differently about it through reconceptualising reflexivity and experience. This was my project. *Conceptualising for becoming differently*. This was my methodology, because in conceptualising and reconceptualising the concepts open up different ways of living, because my thesis, myself, and the world are intra-actively becoming.

## **Reflexivity and experience reconceptualised**

I have worked on reconceptualising reflexivity. Reflexivity is too often understood as an individual, conscious and intentional capacity to think about ourselves, our involvements, our assumptions, etc. In contrast to this understanding, firstly, I used the poststructural perspective that places reflexivity as given through cultural discourses that shape the way in which we are aware of ourselves to propose, inspired by Bourdieu, that we can reflexively question our assumptions when dwelling in different fields or positionings. Thus, I proposed that reflexivity is ignited when we yield to foreignness and not as a masterful, individual and intentional activity of questioning ourselves. Secondly, I reconceptualised reflexivity as affective ways of relating that produce. That is, reflexivity and subjectivity are not separated but the subject is produced in a reflexive activity – that does not perform from a mastery position but as part of a greater intra-action. Using Barad (2007), I proposed that different theories about reflexivity (reflexivities) work as apparatuses that make the agential cuts that delineate the boundaries of what would be considered a subjectivity, an object, an emotion, culture, and a whole world. I offered the threefold questioning device as a meta-reflexive tool of asking about how we are relating and what is that producing. Thirdly, drawing on the reconceptualisation that I put forward in the previous chapter, I proposed to let reflexivity intra-act with diffraction in a way that their distinctions become more blurred. Furthermore, I emphasised that we never find purely reflexivity (as wanting to grasp ourselves) or purely diffraction; like in a diffraction pattern there is light in the darkness and the other way around. We shift from using reflexivity (which is never pure reflexivity) to use diffraction (which is never purely diffraction) in a moment that cannot be rigidly specified. I put forward that clear-cut definitions can produce ways of relating in academia where there are followers and indoctrination rather than space to think differently. Fourthly, and finally, using my meta-reflexivity, I elaborated how even when we want to enact diffracting and decentring practices we, inevitably, end up betraying our best intentions. Drawing on Derrida and

Deleuze and Guattari, I develop how slippage is not avoidable, and thus I propose to use both concepts and set of practices – reflexivity and diffraction – to think about each other.

The conceptualisation of reflexivity that I produced is a diffracted reflexivity that is coherent with a subject that is continuously materially-discursively produced. A reflexivity that does not come from an individual masterful subject but from a subject that yields to foreignness and to become otherwise in a way that cannot control nor anticipate. A reflexivity that is multiple and that produces its own contexts including the reflexive subject. My reconceptualisation produces the invitation to a meta-reflexivity – to explicitly think about how we are, unavoidably, relating to ourselves – that responds to the imperative need to see what our ways of relating to ourselves, to others, to texts, and to the world in general are producing. A reflexivity that assumes that we are not the master, that we do not know or control how we are relating and so we need to continuously think about how we are relating and what is that producing. This meta-reflexivity is performed understanding, crucially, that the question about how we are relating is another way of relating and not in any way a neutral operation. It is my proposition that the usefulness of this particular way of relating to ourselves that meta-reflexively asks about how we are relating to ourselves/others/texts/(...) is to draw attention to how we are part of a wider production and bring ourselves to a commitment to how we, our relationships, our research, our communities, the environment, the world, are becoming and what that is enabling and what is not. That is why I think that it is an imperative need to use my meta-reflexivity in this way. Ethically, I think we need to stop asking who we are, who the others are, and to start asking what our ways of relating are producing and to wonder how we can relate differently to produce differently. A vital example of that is how my research puts forward a particular way of relating to the concepts and the theories where they are weighted in what possibilities they open and how they produce the world – not in their truth-value – I believe that this way of relating is enabling of an academic community

that is more open to diversity and less keen to policing practices of who is following the 'right' theories and who is not.

The proposal on reflexivity as yielding to foreignness is a contribution to the field of qualitative inquiry, especially to the authors that give relevance to the possibility of questioning our assumptions (Bondi, 2009; Davies et al., 2004; Denzin, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2017; Etherington, 2017; Finlay, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2017; Gemignani, 2017; Pillow, 2003, 2015; G. Rose, 1997; Shaw, 2016; Wilkinson, 1988). The remaining three chapters that delve into reflexivity and diffraction are a contribution to the field of qualitative methodology with their drawing on diffraction – and the rejection of reflexivity (Bozalek & Zembylas, 2017; Campbell, 2004; Davies, 2014; Davies & Gannon, 2013; Gale, 2018; Gale & Wyatt, 2017; Hein, 2016; Jackson, 2017; Jackson & Mazzei, 2012b, 2017; Mazzei, 2014; Murriss & Bozalek, 2019; Wyatt, 2019). My work particularly contributes the possibility to think about reflexivity with diffraction and to have a critical perspective on diffraction. All of these chapters make a contribution to the conceptualisation of subjectivity through poststructural and posthumanist lenses, making also use of psychoanalytic theory. Butler (1997b, 2005) and Kristeva (1991) have made advancements in this intersection, although mostly through the using Lacanian theory and poststructuralism. Finally, each chapter on reflexivity is a contribution to psychotherapy because their insights can be explored in the psychotherapeutic field – as I briefly do in many places and I will do in the next section. Particularly, my reconceptualisation of reflexivity as affective ways of relating that produce, and its invitation to a meta-reflexivity, is a contribution to psychotherapy because it invites an awareness about how our ways of relating are producing the client, ourselves as psychotherapists, what we consider a problem, an interpretation, an emotion, and so on. I consider that this is a work that started in this thesis but that needs a piece of work on its own to be properly developed.

And experience, what did I do with experience? I explored the conceptualisations of experience through existential phenomenology, poststructuralism and posthumanism to see what they produce, how they shape my subjectivity, affects, identity, and so on. What questions they open and in general how they produce experience. Finally, I articulated a conceptualisation of experience using the three traditions: I think about experience in an impersonal manner, as affect that can be taken up by a subjectivity producing this very subjectivity in that movement. However, even if experience is impersonal, I can still speak about 'subjective experience' because the subject is not conceptualised as bounded but as becoming: I 'find' myself, losing myself. Experience as affect is not passive but has a strength on its own which goes beyond the control of the subjectivity that is experiencing it. The way of taking up this experience is, as existential phenomenology grants, blindly through the opacity of the bodily sensations so that we follow its stream of life. Nonetheless, affect does not necessarily take us to enabling places and we need the critical questioning of experience that poststructuralism is so good at to interrogate the productions of experience.

This is a contribution to the work on experience and subjectivity, especially in relation to authors that are using posthumanism for this purpose (Blackman et al., 2008; Gale, 2016; Manning, 2009, 2014; Manning & Massumi, 2014; Williams, 2010). My particular contribution to these discussions is the emphasis in how we can still speak of subjective experience amidst the problematisation that posthumanism places on the notion of subjectivity as bounded. The reconceptualisation of experience also speaks to psychotherapy, providing a new way of understanding a vital concept as subjective experience. How this would affect psychotherapeutic theory and practice is something that needs further elaboration in future projects.

### **Where does this take us/me?**

Making sense of ourselves goes in tandem with producing ourselves. When we are reflexive about ourselves we relate to ourselves in particular ways that



produce ourselves and the world. We do not do this from a masterful position, we are always becoming with a greater assemblage. Drawing on Barad (2007), when we make sense of ourselves we make an agential cut that produces the boundaries of our very subjectivity. 'We' – as bounded subjectivities – did not make the agential cut, the agential cut is the one that produces these differentiations in the first place.

Furthermore, precisely because we are not the masters in this game, I insist on being reflexive about how we also reproduce what we criticise; how we find ourselves where we did not expect. I put forward that this acknowledgment helps to produce ways of making sense (personal narratives, theories) that continue to be open to re-configurations. We are not the masters of this game and this has its perks because it makes us able to *use* (Winnicott, 1971) the authors because we see them outside our omnipotence. In this way, we can find nutrition in the texts because they offer something that is not already ours.

I strongly argue that in holding a relational, immanent and performative ontoepistemology, the concepts and the theories, are not needed to be regarded as better or worst reflections of the world but as emerging from particular material-discursive configurations and producing other material-discursive configurations or worlds. In that sense, I regard the theories and the concepts in relation to the world that they produce, to the possibilities that they enable and to the contexts that call for them. I believe that this perspective can help to embrace the diversity of theories and possibilities and to further articulate rather than categorically reject conceptualisations as not good enough.

What I put forward has important implications for psychotherapy, for research and for our lives in general. In the context of psychotherapy, if I take seriously that in making sense of ourselves, we produce ourselves, I need to think about what my client says – how they are reflexive about themselves – not as representing their affective life as if it was a thing in itself already there; instead, I would need to think about their making sense as a way of relating to

themselves that is producing their affective life. This is not to say that their affective life – their experience – is passive material that is shaped by language. Indeed, their bodily experience has a strength on its own that intra-acts (with) their narratives. Hence, I am proposing not to give the full responsibility to our verbal ways of making sense; it is not as constructivists would say just about how we interpret the situations, ourselves or others; we are far more decentred and connected than that. The making sense is not our sovereign creation; instead, our experience – as an impersonal thought (Bion, 1970)/affect (Williams, 2010) that goes through us – as well as the intersubjective dynamics that are active and the material-discursive practices that we are part of, have all their strength in relation to how we make sense, to how we relate to ourselves. We find ourselves feeling and making sense and relating to ourselves in particular ways; we do not decide this, it happens. This is not to say that it ‘happens to us’ as if we were the victims or just the passive recipients of external forces; ‘we’ are part of it, part of the intra-action, part of the world’s becoming. We are far more decentred and connected than what we might assume sometimes because this identity, this ‘we’, this ‘I’, is constantly being produced in a greater assemblage. In that sense, it is important to use this meta-reflexivity that I am proposing to see how the client and how we are relating to our own selves and to the other and the space, and so on, and what is that producing.

For example, when my client makes sense of herself as a spoiled little girl for asking the presence of her loved ones, I think about how this is not capturing how things ‘are’, but it is producing the way in which things ‘are’. Using the threefold questioning device that I developed in chapter four: *Reflexivities as affective ways of relating that produce* (that is, using my meta-reflexivity) I think that she is relating to herself by judging herself harshly as she could transparently see how she essentially is – spoiled, too demanding – and needing affectively to reject and control her ‘neediness’ (as if it was an essential feature of her). Maybe this way of relating is producing her difficulty to give weight to her vulnerabilities, her apparent toughness, the emotional

distance with herself, and so on. Not to mention how her way of being reflexive about herself is entangled with me and with all of what is present in the room – the spatiality of the chairs, the cultural backgrounds, the material-discursive practices of the institutions we are part of, the affective tonalities of our bodies, and so on. She is not making sense on her own, as if she could stand separately from everything else that is shaping her at the moment. Hence, I am, as her psychotherapist, part of what is becoming in that scene and my way of intervening is from the inside; If I make an interpretation it is not its representational value alone what is impactful but how this interpretation generates different productions. The way in which this interpretation will impact has to do with all of what is intra-acting at the moment that I can momentarily define as, say, the affective tension of our bodies, how my voice sounds, the light that enters in the room and the authority invested in the figure of the psychotherapist. My presence/thinking/acting/feeling there with the client arranges things differently and I need to be attentive to what it is being produced and how enabling is that and for what purposes.

Hence, how the client makes sense is produced by wider affective-relational-discursive-material practices, and the making sense also produces – through making an agential cut that defines boundaries – the subjectivity that utters the narrative that makes sense of the situation and all the world around. As a psychotherapist, I am in the entanglement and producing in ways that I cannot completely control. What I can do is to be curious (to be meta-reflexive) about how I find myself and the client and to be attentive and critical of the productions of the psychotherapeutic intra-action.

Psychotherapy moves away from representing and categorising. I do not need to ‘find’ a theory or evidence about how humans function as if it was a foundational truth. Knowledge is produced and productive and it becomes more relevant to think about what it does, what it enables. This perspective can help to open to other practices of making sense and making knowledge because I place more importance in the productions. Then, if I reject a

knowledge and a practice it has to do with my consideration that its productions in that particular context are rather detrimental and not with a rejection of the theory or practice altogether. The ethical dimension is inevitably part of knowing: ethic-onto-epistemology, what our knowledge is producing.

Reflexivity is integrated as an ability that what we would expect a psychotherapist to develop. Psychotherapists in training are encouraged to be reflexive about themselves, to be able to use themselves in psychotherapy. For example, in one of the first assignments of one of the courses on Counsellor education here at the University of Edinburgh, students are asked to make a reflective biographical account about the development of their motivation to become a helper. What does this question produce? Marking these assignments, I would say that most of them make narratives of different reasons that have led them to choose to study for becoming a helper. They are reflexive about themselves in a transparent, and essentialist manner. Just in a couple of occasions I have read students that say: "I do not know", and move the reflection in more explorative and questioning manners. I wonder if this question helps to produce a more structured identity narrative that reads like "because of x, y and z experiences, I have developed my drive to become a helper". I wonder whether another question like: how are you relating to the fact that you are studying counselling? Or, how do you relate to the idea of becoming a helper? Might enable more exploration and questioning. Moreover, if we add to that an indication to include not only the relationships with other people but also how wider cultural and material contexts and practices are part of their development as a counsellor, that would probably collaborate to generate a more critical and politically involved perspective and practice in the students.

The students in the counsellor education at the University practice their therapeutic listening in listening triads with other students. In this exercise, they are also asked to reflexively think about their experience in the different roles – especially in the listener role. As a tutor in this triads, I have found very useful

to bring their attention to how they are relating to themselves and to each other: that is, in my conceptualisation, to use meta-reflexivity. For instance, they can be quite nervous about getting it right or performing well. Instead of giving them any kind of answer, I invite them to think about what ways of relating to themselves and to the talker there are present and how enabling they are, what they are producing. For instance, how does the talker feel if I am relating to them as needing to grasp what they are feeling so that I can feel reassured? Students can quite quickly get that it is important to enable a way of relating to the talker and to themselves that allows space for difficult feelings, and acceptance of what is emerging, whatever that is. It is still a challenge for me to think about how to broaden and transform this understanding to include the material-discursive practices as part of what is happening in the room.

In the research context, if I think about an interview with a participant, I need to think about how my questions and ways of responding to their narratives and presence, together with all the material-discursive practices that are present at the moment are shaping and producing their very narratives, that in turn, produce them as a particular kind of subjectivity. I need to wonder what their narrative, and my narrative of them, my research, are doing.

In writing theory, I need to think about what my writing produces, what it enables, what it forecloses: what my writing is doing. I do not feel myself as a masterful creator; I write in the middle of things, many things write through me, the assemblage that I also am writes the texts, writes me, and writes the world. Crucially, I think that this decentring is also fundamentally connecting; I find myself in losing myself. Furthermore, when I read I do not read as pinning down what a text is, but try to *use* (Winnicott, 1971) it because it goes beyond what I can control; it can surprise me. I read diffractively, seeing where the text can take me, what worlds it makes appear and how it can change me. An adventure rather than a distanced analysis.

In the personal context, when I give any account of my state, I do not think about it as my sovereign creation but as a narrative that got shaped in all of

what is intra-acting (with) me at the moment. Importantly, whenever I make sense of myself the pressing question appears, what is this producing? For instance, if I say: “I have had a very difficult day because these dates affect me”, there are cultural discourses on how people should feel, rainy weather, affective encounters, a felt lack of vitality and uncountable other things that are producing this statement and my subjectivity at this moment. This way of making sense of myself “I have had a very difficult day because these dates affect me” produces me as an affected subject experiencing a temporal difficulty. I think this narrative helps me to frame my feelings but what does it not allow me to do?

In giving relevance to how when we make sense we are not reflecting an already existing and bounded affective state, I am not saying that the practices of making sense have not value in relation to articulate something of what is actually happening. Gendlin (1964, 1968, 1973, 1981, 2003, 2004) makes this clear, it is not that the symbolisation that we use to make sense of our experience reflects it – as if it was a unit already there – instead, how we articulate our experience *does* something to our experience; the narrative makes an impact on something there (experience) even if this experience is not shaped or formed. What the posthumanist idea of affect adds to this is that the experience is active and not only goes beyond the subjectivity that is living it but also produces it. Similarly, I do not argue that I can just have any narrative because they are not true or false but performative. Instead, I put forward that the different narratives do/produce different things in intra-action with bodily feelings. Which narrative we make matters. The crucial insight of Gendlin is that when the narrative is articulated ‘following’ from the felt sense, then our experience gets worked through and there is a felt change that makes our experiencing open and in process, rather than frozen and repeating old patterns.

My emphasis on the questions *how are we relating and what does this produce?* may lead us to think that we can have an objective answer to it.

Nonetheless, as I have insisted, the articulation of an answer to this question is another way of relating that produces; it is not representing as if capturing what is already there. I could articulate infinite answers to this question and all of them would have different productions. These questions *how am I relating and what does this produce?* has a reflective and representational flavour even in putting forward something performative. I want to assert the productions, to say what *are* the productions; the paradox is there and I cannot resolve it. What I emphasise is that these meta-reflexive questions are advantageous because they are a way of relating that produces us as part of the world's becoming; it opens the ethical questioning that asks about what we are producing and whether that is enabling and for what. Nonetheless, yet again, this questioning about how enabling the productions are has a representational flavour even when I assert that I cannot answer this questioning in any neutral and objective way. There is not an objective ethical compass in which to rely. Every theory has an implicit ethic; for some it might be control and prediction to 'improve' life conditions, justice and equality, dominance and expansion, etc. Evidently this thesis is ethically embracing processes of becoming, tolerance towards all kinds of foreignness, sustaining tensions rather than polarising, and questioning social productions of categorisation, exclusion and in general dynamics of domination. Nonetheless, even if I am committed to this ethic, I affirm the value of questioning our implicit and explicit ethical commitments to be able to keep thinking, and, paradoxically, *to keep thinking* seems to be my ethical compass at the moment.

I know that I cannot represent my experience as if it was something in itself that I can capture and yet I find myself trying to do it. I make sense, I need to make sense as if I was capturing what is happening. I look for reflexivity as grasping myself, I cannot avoid practices of centring and identity even in putting forward that every boundary is continuously produced. I propose to embrace this need of mine/of us to generate symbolisations and theories that remain open to re-articulations. With relational psychoanalysis (Bromberg, 1996, 2010; D. B. Stern, 2004), I emphasise the need to accept the not-me of

the ideals of the different theories – in the case of posthumanism, a subjectivity that wants to know who she ‘is’ – to be able to keep thinking.

I am finishing this thesis, after three years and a few months of being immersed in it, my first three years and a few months living abroad, speaking and writing in my second language, finishing this project and opening up for other projects. In finishing this thesis, I feel less of an urgency to make sense of myself as to be sure of ‘who I am’, to know what is going to happen next and to be seen for ‘who I am’. This project does have produced me differently; I do not know exactly how, but it feels different.

My childhood wonderment: Karen, Karen, Karen, who is Karen, anyway? In repeating my name its meaning faded, became strange. I do not know who Karen ‘is’ and that is fine. I am becoming with; I find me, again and again, where I do not expect to. I find myself in losing myself. Without striving for it, I learnt to make sense of myself in a looser way, tolerating uncertainty and unformed states and that produced myself differently. As well as tolerating the pressing need that emerges at times of knowing who I am, who are the others and what is happening.

There are different practices of making sense of oneself: one can be more reflexive in a search for reasons and certainties, one can make sense of oneself as becoming and not bounded, one can make sense of oneself as discursively produced, one can make sense of oneself as driven by biological instincts, by relationships, by desire, by ideals, and so on. There are infinite ways of making sense of ourselves and so of producing ourselves differently. We find ourselves enacting them; we do not masterfully decide how we make sense of ourselves and so how we become. Nonetheless, ethically, I emphasise the importance of thinking about how we are relating, how we are making sense of ourselves, others and the world and the productions that this relating has. I propose that a tolerance and an acknowledgment of the different ways in which we make sense and so produce ourselves, even when we strongly reject them, is vital to keep the process open and flowing, to not get



stagnant in a certainty that congeals us even when – maybe more when –  
passionately declaring our love to becoming.

## References

- Adams, M. (2006). Hybridizing Habitus and Reflexivity: Towards an Understanding of Contemporary Identity? *Sociology*, 40(3), 511-528.
- Adams, T., & Holman Jones, S. (2011). Telling Stories: Reflexivity, Queer Theory, and Autoethnography. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 11(2), 108-116.
- Adkins, L. (2003). Reflexivity: freedom or habit of gender? *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20(6), 21-42.
- Akram, S., Emerson, G., & Marsh, D. (2015). (Re)Conceptualising the third face of power: insights from Bourdieu and Foucault. *Journal of Political Power*, 8(3), 345-362.
- Akram, S., & Hogan, A. (2015). On reflexivity and the conduct of the self in everyday life: reflections on Bourdieu and Archer. *British Journal of Sociology*, 66(4), 606-625.
- Arac, J. (Ed.) (1986). *Postmodernism and Politics*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.
- Aron, L. (2000). Self-Reflexivity and the Therapeutic Action of Psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 17(4), 667-689.
- Aron, L. (2006). Analytic impasse and the third: clinical implications of intersubjectivity theory. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 87(2), 349-368.
- Barad, K. (2003). Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Signs*, 28(3), 801-831.
- Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the universe halfway quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning*. London: Duke University Press.
- Bass, A. (2015). The Dialogue of Unconsciouses, Mutual Analysis and the Uses of the Self in Contemporary Relational Psychoanalysis. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 25(1), 2-17.
- Benjamin, J. (1990). An outline of intersubjectivity: The development of recognition. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 7, 33-46.

- Benjamin, J. (2004). Beyond doer and done to: an intersubjective view of thirdness. *The Psychoanalytic quarterly*, 73(1), 5-46.
- Bion, W. (1962a). A Theory of Thinking. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 43, 306-310.
- Bion, W. (1962b). *Learning from experience*. London: Tavistock.
- Bion, W. (1970). *Attention and interpretation a scientific approach to insight in psycho-analysis and groups*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Blackman, L., Cromby, J., Hook, D., Papadopoulos, D., & Walkerdine, V. (2008). Creating Subjectivities. *Subjectivity*, 22(1), 1-27.
- Bollas, C. (1979). The transformational object. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 60(1), 97-107.
- Bollas, C. (1982). On the relation to the self as an object. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 63(3), 347-359.
- Bollas, C. (1987). *The shadow of the object : psychoanalysis of the unthought known*. London: Free Association.
- Bondi, L. (2009). Teaching Reflexivity: undoing or reinscribing habits of gender? *Journal of Geography in Higher Education*, 33(3), 327-337.
- Bondi, L. (2012). Research and Therapy: Generating Meaning and Feeling Gaps. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 19(1), 9-19.
- Bondi, L. (2014). Understanding feelings: Engaging with unconscious communication and embodied knowledge. *Emotion, Space and Society*, 10(1), 44-54.
- Boston Change Process Study Group, J. P., & Nahum, J. P. (2008). Forms of Relational Meaning: Issues in the Relations Between the Implicit and Reflective-Verbal Domains. *Psychoanalytic Dialogues*, 18(2), 125-148.
- Bottero, W. (2010). Intersubjectivity and Bourdieusian Approaches to 'Identity'. *Cultural Sociology*, 4(1), 3-22.
- Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline of a theory of practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1984). *Distinction: a social critique of the judgement of taste*. London: Routledge.

- Bourdieu, P. (1989). Social Space and Symbolic Power. *Sociological Theory*, 7(1), 14-25.
- Bourdieu, P. (1990). *In other words: essays towards a reflexive sociology*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P. (1993). *The field of cultural production: essays on art and literature*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An invitation to reflexive sociology*. Oxford: Polity Press.
- Bozalek, V., & Zembylas, M. (2017). Diffraction or Reflection? Sketching the Contours of Two Methodologies in Educational Research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 30(2), 111-127.
- Braidotti, R. (2018). A Theoretical Framework for the Critical Posthumanities. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 36(6), 31-61.
- Britton, R. (2010). Developmental uncertainty versus paranoid regression. *Psychoanalytic review*, 97(2), 195-206.
- Britton, R., & Steiner, J. (1994). Interpretation: selected fact or overvalued idea? *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 75(5), 1069-1078.
- Bromberg, P. M. (1996). Standing in the Spaces: The Multiplicity of Self and the Psychoanalytic Relationship. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 32(4), 509-535.
- Bromberg, P. M. (2000). Potholes on the Royal Road. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 31(1), 5-28.
- Bromberg, P. M. (2010). Minding the dissociative gap. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 46(1), 19-31.
- Brown, J. (2006). Reflexivity in the Research Process: Psychoanalytic Observations. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 9(3), 181-197.
- Bruschweiler-Stern, N., Harrison, A. M., Lyons-Ruth, K., Morgan, A. C., Nahum, J. P., Sander, L. W., Tronick, E. Z. (2002). Explicating the implicit: the local level and the microprocess of change in the analytic situation. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 83, 1051-1062.

- Bustos, D. (1975). *Psicodrama: Acción + Palabra*. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), 519-519.
- Butler, J. (1991). Imitation and Gender Insubordination. In D. Fuss (Ed.), *Inside/out: lesbian theories, gay theories*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997a). *Excitable speech a politics of the performative*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (1997b). *The psychic life of power: theories in subjection*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.
- Butler, J. (1999). *Gender trouble: feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2004). What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue. In S. Salih (Ed.), *The Judith Butler reader* (pp. 302-322). Oxford: Blackwell.
- Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an account of oneself* (First edition ed.). New York: Fordham University Press.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Gender trouble feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2014). *Bodies that matter on the discursive limits of sex*. New York: Routledge.
- Campbell, K. (2004). The Promise of Feminist Reflexivities: Developing Donna Haraway's Project for Feminist Science Studies. *Hypatia*, 19(1), 162-182.
- Clough, P. T., & Halley, J. O. M. (2007). *The affective turn: theorizing the social*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Colebrook, C. (2002). *Understanding Deleuze*. Crows Nest: Allen & Unwin.
- Coole, D. H., & Frost, S. (2010). *New materialisms ontology, agency, and politics*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Craig, E. (1998). *Routledge encyclopedia of philosophy*. London: Routledge.
- Davies, B. (2014). Reading Anger in Early Childhood Intra-Actions: A Diffractive Analysis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 734-741.

- Davies, B., Browne, J., Gannon, S., Honan, E., Laws, C., Mueller-Rockstroh, B., & Petersen, E. B. (2004). The Ambivalent Practices of Reflexivity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(3), 360-389.
- Davies, B., & Gannon, S. (2013). Collective Biography and the Entangled Enlivening of Being. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 5(4), 357-376.
- Dacruz, H., Gillingham, P., & Melendez, S. (2007). Reflexivity, its Meanings and Relevance for Social Work: A Critical Review of the Literature. *The British Journal of Social Work*, 37(1), 73-90.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books.
- Deleuze, G. (1995). *Negotiations: 1972-1990*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (2004). *Difference and repetition*. London: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G. (2006). *Foucault*. London: Continuum.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* (B. Massumi, Trans.). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. I. (1983). *Anti-Oedipus : capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. I. (1994). *What is philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Parnet, C. (2007). *Dialogues II*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Denzin, N. K. (1997). *Interpretive ethnography ethnographic practices for the 21st century*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE.
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2017). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (Fifth Edition ed.). Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Derrida, J. (1973). *Speech and phenomena, and other essays on Husserl's theory of signs*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Derrida, J. (1978). *Writing and difference*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Derrida, J. (1997). *Of grammatology*. London: Johns Hopkins University Press.

- Dreyfus, H. L. (2000). A Merleau-Pontyan Critique of Husserl's and Searle's Representationalist Accounts of Action. *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, 100(3), 287-302.
- Eigen, M. (1981). The area of faith in Winnicott, Lacan and Bion. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 62, 413-433.
- Etherington, K. (2004). *Becoming a reflexive researcher: using our selves in research*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Etherington, K. (2017). Personal experience and critical reflexivity in counselling and psychotherapy research. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 17(2), 85-94.
- Fairbairn, W. R. D. (1952). *Psychoanalytic studies of the personality*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Feyaerts, J., & Vanheule, S. (2015). How to return to subjectivity? Natorp, Husserl, and Lacan on the limits of reflection. *Theory & Psychology*, 25(6), 753-774.
- Fillion, R. (1998). Foucault on History and the Self. *Laval théologique et philosophique*, 54(1), 143-162.
- Finlay, L. (1998). Reflexivity: An Essential Component for All Research? *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61(10), 453-456.
- Finlay, L. (2002). Negotiating the swamp: The opportunity and challenge of reflexivity in research practice. *Qualitative Research*, 2(2), 209-230.
- Finlay, L. (2003). *The reflexive journey: mapping multiple routes* Oxford: Blackwell Science Ltd.
- Finlay, L. (2008). A Dance Between the Reduction and Reflexivity: Explicating the "Phenomenological Psychological Attitude". *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 39(1), 1-32.
- Finlay, L. (2009). Ambiguous Encounters: A Relational Approach to Phenomenological Research. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 9(1), 1-17.
- Finlay, L. (2017). Championing "reflexivities". *Qualitative Psychology*, 4(2), 120-125.

- Finlay, L., & Gough, B. (2003). *Reflexivity a practical guide for researchers in health and social sciences*. Oxford: Blackwell Science.
- Flyvbjerg, B. (2001). *Making social science matter: why social inquiry fails and how it can succeed again*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Fornet-Betancourt, R., Becket, H., & Gomez-Muller, A. (1987). The ethic of care for the self as a practice of freedom, an interview with Michel Foucault on January 20, 1984. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 12(2-3), 112-131.
- Foucault, M. (1972). *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1978). *The history of sexuality*. (R. Hurley, Trans. Vol. 1, An Introduction). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1980). *Power/knowledge: selected interviews and other writings, 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1982). The subject and power. *Critical Inquiry*, 8(4), 777-795.
- Foucault, M. (1984). What is Enlightenment? In P. Rabinow (Ed.), *The Foucault Reader*. New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1986). *The care of the self*. (Vol. 3 of The History of Sexuality). New York: Pantheon Books.
- Foucault, M. (1990). *The Use of Pleasure* (Vol. 2 of the The History of Sexuality.). New York: Vintage Books.
- Foucault, M. (1997). *Ethics, Subjectivity and Truth*. New York: The New Press.
- Fox, N. J., & Alldred, P. (2013). The Sexuality-Assemblage: Desire, Affect, Anti-Humanism. *The Sociological Review*, 61(4), 769-789.
- Frie, R., & Reis, B. (2001). Understanding Intersubjectivity: Psychoanalytic Formulations and Their Philosophical Underpinnings. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 37(2), 297-327.
- Gale, K. (2016). Writing Minor Literature: Working With Flows, Intensities and the Welcome of the Unknown. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(5), 301-301.
- Gale, K. (2018). *Madness as methodology: bringing concepts to life in contemporary theorizing and inquiry*. Oxon; New York: Routledge.



- Gale, K., & Wyatt, J. (2017). Working at the Wonder: Collaborative Writing as Method of Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(5), 355-364.
- Gemignani, M. (2017). Toward a Critical Reflexivity in Qualitative Inquiry: Relational and Posthumanist Reflections on Realism, Researcher's Centrality, and Representationalism in Reflexivity. *Qualitative Psychology*, 4(2), 185-198.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1964). A Theory of Personality Change. In P. Worchel & D. Byrne (Eds.), *Personality Change* (pp. 100-148). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1968). The Experiential Response. In E. Hammer (Ed.), *Use of interpretation in treatment: Technique and Art* (pp. 208-227). New York: Jason Aronson Inc.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1973). Experiential phenomenology. In M. Natanson (Ed.), *Phenomenology and the social sciences* (Vol. I, pp. 281-319). Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1981). *Focusing*. New York; London: Bantam.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1997a). Experiencing and the creation of meaning: A philosophical and psychological approach to the subjective. In Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press.
- Gendlin, E. T. (1997b). Psicoterapia experiencial. In C. Alemany (Ed.), *Psicoterapia Experiencial y Focusing: la Aportación de Eugene T. Gendlin*. Bilbao: Desclée de brouwer.
- Gendlin, E. T. (2003). Beyond Postmodernism: From concepts to experience. In R. Frie (Ed.), *Understanding Experience: Psychotherapy and Postmodernism* (pp. 100-115). New York: Routledge.
- Gendlin, E. T. (2004). The new phenomenology of carrying forward. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 37(1), 1-24.
- Georgiadou, L. (2016). "You Look Like Them": Drawing on Counselling Theory and Practice to Reflexively Negotiate Cultural Difference in Research Relationships. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling*, 38(4), 358-368.

- Ghent, E. (1990). Masochism, Submission, Surrender: Masochism as a Perversion of Surrender. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 26(1), 108-136.
- Haraway, D. J. (1988). Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective. *Feminist Studies*, 14(3), 575-599.
- Haraway, D. J. (1992). The promises of monsters: A regenerative politics for inappropriate/d others. In L. Grossberg, C. Nelson, & P. A. Treichler (Eds.), *Cultural studies* (pp. 295-336). New York; London: Routledge.
- Haraway, D. J. (1997). *Modest-Witness@Second-Millennium.FemaleMan-Meets-OncoMouse : feminism and technoscience*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.
- Harcourt, B. (2007). An Answer to the Question: 'What is Poststructuralism?'. *The University of Chicago: Public Law and Legal Theory Working Paper Series*, (156).
- Harding, S. (1993). Rethinking Standpoint Epistemology: What Is "Strong Objectivity"? In L. Alcoff & E. J. Potter (Eds.), *Feminist epistemologies* (pp. 49-82). New York; London: Routledge.
- Hartsock, N. (2006). Experience, Embodiment, and Epistemologies. *Hypatia*, 21(2), 178-183.
- Hein, S. F. (2016). The New Materialism in Qualitative Inquiry: How Compatible Are the Philosophies of Barad and Deleuze? *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 16(2), 132-140.
- Hollway, W., & Jefferson, T. (2013). *Doing qualitative research differently: a psychosocial approach* (Second edition.. ed.). London: SAGE.
- Holmes, J. (2013). Using Psychoanalysis in Qualitative Research: Countertransference-Informed Researcher Reflexivity and Defence Mechanisms in Two Interviews about Migration. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 10(2), 160-173.

- Jackson, A. Y. (2017). Thinking Without Method. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(9), 666-674.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2008). Experience and "I" in Autoethnography. A Deconstruction. *International Review of Qualitative Research*, 1(3), 299-318.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2012a). Complicating Voice in a Refusal to "Let Participants Speak for Themselves". *Qualitative Inquiry*, 18(9), 745-751.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2012b). *Thinking with theory in qualitative research viewing data across multiple perspectives*. London: Routledge.
- Jackson, A. Y., & Mazzei, L. A. (2017). Voice in the Agentic Assemblage. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 49(11), 1090-1098.
- Kristeva, J. (1991). *Strangers to ourselves*. New York; London: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Kuehner, A., Ploder, A., & Langer, P. C. (2016). Introduction to the Special Issue: European Contributions to Strong Reflexivity. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 699-704.
- Lapping, C. (2016). Reflexivity and Fantasy: Surprising Encounters From Interpretation to Interruption. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(9), 718-724.
- Lather, P. (1993). Fertile Obsession: Validity After Poststructuralism. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34(4), 673-693.
- Lather, P. (2007). *Getting lost: feminist efforts toward a double(d) science*. Albany, New York: State University of New York Press.
- Lather, P., & St. Pierre, E. A. (2013). Post-qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(6), 629-633.
- Latour, B. (1988). The politics of explanation: an alternative. In S. Woolgar (Ed.), *Knowledge and reflexivity: new frontiers in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Sage.
- Lenz Taguchi, H. (2012). A diffractive and Deleuzian approach to analysing interview data. *Feminist theory*, 13(3), 265-281.

- Lenz Taguchi, H. (2013). Images of thinking in feminist materialisms: ontological divergences and the production of researcher subjectivities. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(6), 706-716.
- Lenz Taguchi, H. (2016). "The Concept as Method": Tracing-and-mapping the Problem of the Neuro(n) in the Field of Education. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 16(2), 213-223.
- Levenson, E. A. (1993). Shoot the Messenger: Interpersonal Aspects of the Analyst's Interpretations. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 29(3), 383-396.
- Levenson, E. A. (2001). The Enigma of the Unconscious *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 37(2), 239-252.
- Linnell, S., Bansel, P., Ellwood, C., & Gannon, S. (2008). Precarious Listening. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(2), 285-306.
- Longford, G. (2001). "Sensitive Killers, Cruel Aesthetes, and Pitiless Poets": Foucault, Rorty, and the Ethics of Self-Fashioning. *Polity*, 33(4), 569-592.
- Lynch, M., & Woolgar, S. (Eds.). (1990). *Representation in scientific practice*. Cambridge, Mass; London: MIT Press.
- Löytönen, T., Koro-Ljungberg, M., Carlson, D., Orange, A., & Cruz, J. (2015). A Pink Writing Experiment. *Reconceptualizing Educational Research Methodology*, 6(1).
- Manning, E. (2009). What if it Didn't All Begin and End with Containment? Toward a Leaky Sense of Self. *Body & Society*, 15(3), 33-45.
- Manning, E. (2014). Wondering the World Directly – or, How Movement Outruns the Subject. *Body & Society*, 20(3-4), 162-188.
- Manning, E., & Massumi, B. (2014). *Thought in the act: passages in the ecology of experience*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Massumi, B. (1987). Translator's Foreword: Pleasures of Philosophy. In G. Deleuze & F. I. Guattari (Eds.), *A thousand plateaus capitalism and schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

- Massumi, B. (1995). The Autonomy of Affect. *Cultural Critique*(31), 83-109.
- Mazzei, L. A. (2013). A voice without organs: interviewing in posthumanist research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 26(6), 732-740.
- Mazzei, L. A. (2014). Beyond an Easy Sense: A Diffractive Analysis. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 20(6), 742-746.
- Mazzei, L. A. (2016). Voice Without a Subject. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 16(2), 151-161.
- Mazzei, L. A. (2017). Following the Contour of Concepts Toward a Minor Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 23(9), 675-685.
- McNay, L. (1999). Gender, Habitus and the Field: Pierre Bourdieu and the Limits of Reflexivity. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 16(1), 95-117.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1968). *The visible and the invisible: followed by working notes*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (2012). *Phenomenology of perception*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Mitchell, S. A. (1981). Heinz Kohut's theory of narcissism. *American journal of psychoanalysis*, 41(January 1980), 317-326.
- Mitchell, S. A. (2000). *Relationality: From attachment to intersubjectivity*. New Jersey: The Analytic Press.
- Mitchell, S. A., & Aron, L. (2013). *Relational Psychoanalysis, Volume 14 : The Emergence of a Tradition*. Florence: Routledge.
- Moreno, J. L. (1955). *Preludes to my autobiography*. New York: Bacon.
- Moreno, J. L. (1972). *Psicodrama*. Buenos Aires: Hormé.
- Moreno, J. L. (1995). *El psicodrama: terapia de acción y principios de su práctica*. Buenos Aires: Hormé-Paidós.
- Murray, F. (2017). 'There are two clocks in here and they are not in sync': Counsellors' and clients' struggles with online pornography. *Counselling and Psychotherapy Research*, 17(1), 34-41.
- Murray, F. (2019). Double-sided tape: Affect, Amazon and a science project. *Departures in Critical Qualitative Research*, 8(3), 55-59.

- Murris, K., & Bozalek, V. (2019). Diffraction and response-able reading of texts: the relational ontologies of Barad and Deleuze. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 32(7), 872-886.
- Nentwich, J. C., Ozbilgin, M. F., & Tatli, A. (2013). Change agency as performance and embeddedness: Exploring the possibilities and limits of Butler and Bourdieu. *Culture and Organization*, 21(3), 235-250.
- Nietzsche, F. W. (1968). *The will to power*. London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson.
- Ogden, T. H. (1986). *The matrix of the mind: object relations and the psychoanalytic dialogue*. Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson.
- Ogden, T. H. (1988). On the Dialectical Structure of Experience: Some Clinical and Theoretical Implications. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 24(1), 17-45.
- Ogden, T. H. (1997). *Reverie and interpretation: sensing something human*. London: Karnac.
- Patton, P. (2006). Deleuze's Practical Philosophy. *Symposium: Canadian Journal of Continental Philosophy*, 10(1), 285-303.
- Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 16(2), 175-196.
- Pillow, W. (2015). Reflexivity as Interpretation and Genealogy in Research. *Cultural Studies ↔ Critical Methodologies*, 15(6), 419-434.
- Rafieian, S., & Davis, H. (2016). Dissociation, reflexivity and habitus. *European journal of social theory*, 19(4), 556-573.
- Reyes, G. (2005). *Psicodrama: Paradigma, teoría y método*. Santiago: Cuatro Vientos.
- Richardson, L. (1994). Writing: A method of inquiry. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Thousand Oaks, Calif; London: SAGE.
- Rose, G. (1997). Situating knowledges: positionality, reflexivities and other tactics. *Progress in Human Geography*, 21(3), 305-320.

- Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing our selves: psychology, power, and personhood*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Sartre, J. P. (2015). *Being and nothingness: an essay on phenomenological ontology*. London: Routledge.
- Schön, D. A. (2008). *The reflective practitioner: how professionals think in action*. New York: Basic Books.
- Sedgwick, E. K. (2003). Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You're So Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You In A. Frank (Ed.), *Touching feeling : affect, pedagogy, performativity*. Durham; London: Duke University Press.
- Serra Undurraga, J. K. A. (2016). El diagnóstico del narcisismo: una lectura relacional. *Revista de la Asociación Española de Neuropsiquiatría*, 36(129), 171-187.
- Shaw, J. A. (2016). Reflexivity and the "Acting Subject": Conceptualizing the Unit of Analysis in Qualitative Health Research. *Qualitative Health Research*, 26(13), 1735-1744.
- Shomron-Atar, E. N. (2018). Psychoanalysis Against Fascism: Fascism, Terrorism, and the Fascist and Terrorist Within. *Psychoanalytic Perspectives*, 15(1), 48-63.
- Smith, D. W. (2018). Phenomenology. In E. N. Zalta (Ed.), *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*
- Spivak, G. C. (1997). Preface. In J. Derrida (Ed.), *Of grammatology*. Baltimore; London: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (1997). Methodology in the fold and the irruption of transgressive data. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 10(2), 175-189.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing Post Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24(9), 603-608.
- St. Pierre, E. A. (2019). Post Qualitative Inquiry in an Ontology of Immanence. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 25(1), 3-16.

- Stern, D. B. (2004). The Eye Sees Itself: Dissociation, Enactment, and the Achievement of Conflict. *Contemporary Psychoanalysis*, 40(2), 197-237.
- Stern, D. N. (2000). *The interpersonal world of the infant: a view from psychoanalysis and developmental psychology*. New York: Basic Books.
- Stoller, S. (2009). Phenomenology and the Poststructural Critique of Experience. *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, 17(5), 707-737.
- Stoller, S. (2010). Expressivity and performativity: Merleau-Ponty and Butler. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 43(1), 97-110.
- Stolorow, R. D., & Atwood, G. E. (1979). *Faces in a Cloud: Subjectivity in Personality Theory*. Northvale: Jason Aronson.
- Vagle, M. D. (2015). Curriculum as Post-Intentional Phenomenological Text: Working along the Edges and Margins of Phenomenology Using Post-Structuralist Ideas. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 47(5), 594-612.
- Vagle, M. D., & Hofsess, B. A. (2016). Entangling a Post-Reflexivity Through Post-Intentional Phenomenology. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 22(5), 334-344.
- Visker, R. (2005). The Strange(r) Within Me. *Ethical Perspectives: Journal of the European Ethics Network*, 12(4), 425-441.
- Widder, N. (2012). A semblance of identity: Nietzsche on the agency of drives and their relation to the ego. *Philosophy & Social Criticism*, 38(8), 821-842.
- Wilkinson, S. (1988). The role of reflexivity in feminist psychology. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 11(5), 493-502.
- Williams, C. (2010). Affective processes without a subject: Rethinking the relation between subjectivity and affect with Spinoza. *Subjectivity*, 3(3), 245-262.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1953). Transitional objects and transitional phenomena; a study of the first not-me possession. *The International journal of psycho-analysis*, 34(2), 89-97.



- Winnicott, D. W. (1964). *The child, the family and the outside world*. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1971). *Playing and reality*. London: Tavistock Publications.
- Winnicott, D. W. (1990). The Aims of Psycho-Analytical Treatment (1962). In *The maturational processes and the facilitating environment: studies in the theory of emotional development*. London: Karnac Books and the Institute of Psycho-Analysis.
- Woolgar, S. (1993). *Science: the very idea*. London; New York: Routledge.
- Woolgar, S. (Ed.) (1988). *Knowledge and reflexivity: new frontiers in the sociology of knowledge*. London: Sage.
- Wyatt, J. (2019). *Therapy, stand-up, and the gesture of writing: towards creative-relational inquiry*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Yang, Y. (2013). Bourdieu, Practice and Change: Beyond the criticism of determinism. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 46(14), 1522-1540.
- Young, L. S., & Frosh, S. (2009). Discourse and psychoanalysis: translating concepts into "fragmenting" methodology. *Psychology in Society*(38), 1-16.
- Zahavi, D. (2003). How to investigate subjectivity: Natorp and Heidegger on reflection. *Continental Philosophy Review*, 36(2), 155-176.